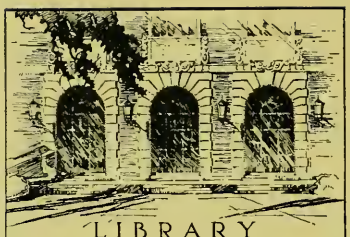

C. S. Talbot from J. G. T.

THREE INTRODUCTORY LECTURES

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ON THE

Study of Ecclesiastical History.

BY

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CONTENTS.

LECTURE III.—THE ADVANTAGES OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

THE PROVINCE

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

When Christian the Pilgrim, in his progress towards the Celestial City, halted by the highway-side at the Palace of which the name was Beautiful, he was told, that—"he should not depart till they had "shewn him the rarities of that place. And first "they had him into the study, where they shewed "him records of the greatest antiquity;" in which was "the pedigree of the Lord of the hill, the Son "of the Ancient of Days". . . . . "Here also were "more fully recorded the acts that he had done, and "the names of many hundreds that he had taken into "his service; and how he had placed them in such "habitations, that could neither by length of days "nor decays of nature be dissolved. Then they read "to him some of the worthy acts that some of his "servants had done; as how they had subdued "kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the "violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant "in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the "aliens. Then they read again in another part of "the records of the house, how willing their Lord

" was to receive in his favour any, even any, though " they in time past had offered great affronts to his " person and proceedings. Here also were several " other histories of other famous things, of all which " Christian had a view; as of things both ancient " and modern, together with prophecies and pre- " dictions of things that have their certain accom- " plishment, both to the dread and amazement of " enemies, and the comfort and solace of pilgrims."

These simple sentences from the familiar story of our childhood contain a true description of the subjects, method, and advantages of the study of Ecclesiastical History, which I now propose to unfold in preparation for the duties which I have been called to discharge. And with this object, it will be my endeavour in this opening Lecture to reduce to order the treasures which were shewn to solace and cheer the Pilgrim on his way, by defining the limits of the province on which we are about to enter.

Beginning of Ecclesiastical History.

I. First, then, where does Ecclesiastical History commence? Shall we begin with the Reformation —with the framework of religion with which we ourselves are specially concerned? Or with the new birth of Christendom, properly so called, in the foundation of modern Europe? Or with the close of the first century—with the age of those to whom we accord the name of our "Fathers" in the Christian faith? In a certain sense, each of these periods may be taken, and by different classes of men always will be taken, respectively, as the boundaries of the

history of the Church. But, if we are fixing, not merely the accidental limits of convenience, but the true limits involved in the nature of the subject; if Ecclesiastical History means the history of the Church of God; if that history is one united whole; if it cannot be understood without embracing within its range the history of the events, of the persons, of the ideas which have had the most lasting, the most powerful effect on every stage of its course, —we must ascend far higher in the stream of time than the sixteenth, or the fifth, or the second century, beyond the Reformers, beyond the Popes, beyond the Fathers.

Call of Abraham.

. . . . Far in the dim distance of primeval ages, is discerned the first figure in the long succession which has never since been broken,—in Ur of the Chaldees, the Patriarchal chief, followed by his train of slaves and retainers, surrounded by his herds of camels and asses, moving westward and southward he knew not whither, drawn on by a mighty destiny big with the hopes of ages,—the first Father of the universal Church,—Abraham, the Founder of the Chosen People, the Father of the faithful, whose seed was to be as the sand upon the sea-shore, as the stars for multitude.

Earlier manifestations doubtless there had been of faith and hope; in other countries also, than Mesopotamia or Palestine, there were yearnings after a higher world. But the call of Abraham is the first beginning of a continuous growth; in his

character, in his migration, in his faith was bound up, as the Christian Apostle well describes, all that has since formed the substance and fibre of the history of the Church.

The History of Israel, the first period of Ecclesiastical History.

From this point, then, we start, and from this shall be prepared to enter on the history of the people of Israel, as the true beginning and prototype of the Christian Church. So in old times it was ever held; to the Apostolic age it could not be otherwise; even Eusebius, writing for a special purpose, is constrained to commence his work by going back (almost in the words with which I opened this lecture) to "records of the greatest antiquity, shewing the pedigree of the Son of the Ancient of days," both divine and human; and, in spite of the ever-increasing materials of later times, the elder dispensation has been included, actually or by implication, in some of the greatest works on Ecclesiastical History. So it must be in the nature of the case, however much, for the sake of convenience or perspicuity, we may divide and subdivide what is in itself one whole. Speaking religiously, the history of the Christian Church can never be separated from the life of its Divine Founder, and that life cannot be separated from the previous history, of which it was the culmination, the explanation, the fulfilment. Speaking philosophically, the history of the religious thoughts and feelings of Europe cannot be understood without a full appreciation of the thoughts and feelings of that Semitic race which

found their highest expression in the history of the Jewish nation.

Nor is it only for the sake of a mere formal completeness that we must thus combine the old and the new in our historical studies. Consider well what that history is,—what a field it opens, what light it receives, what light it gives, by the mere fact of being so regarded. Of all histories, it is not only the most sacred, it is also (if one may use the expression) the most historical. So far from being exempt from the laws of gradual progress and development to which the history of other nations is subject, it is the most remarkable exemplification of those laws. In no people does the history move forward in so regular a course, through beginning, middle, and end, as in the people of Israel. In none are the beginning, middle, and end so clearly distinguished, each from each. In none has the beginning so natural and so impressive a preparation, as that formed by the age of the patriarchs. In none do the various stages of the history so visibly lead the way to the consummation, which, however truly it may be regarded as the opening of a new order, is yet no less truly the end of the old. And nowhere does the final consummation more touchingly linger in the close, more solemnly break away into new forms and new life, than in the last traces of the effects of the Jewish race on the Apostolic age.

Its peculiar interest.

The form, too, of the sacred books of the Old Testament is one of all others most attractive to

the historical student. Out of a great variety of documents, sometimes contemporaneous, sometimes posthumous, sometimes regular narratives, sometimes isolated fragments, is to be constructed the picture of events, persons, manners most diverse. The style and language, of primitive abruptness, pregnant with meaning, is eminently suggestive. The historical annals are combined with rich and constant illustration, from what in secular literature would be called the poets and orators of the nation. There is everything to stimulate research, even did these remains contain no more than the merely human interest which attaches to the records of any great and ancient people.

Its religious importance in connection with Christian History.

But the sons of Israel, as we all know, are much more than this. They are, literally, our spiritual ancestors: their imagery, their poetry, their very names have descended to us; their hopes, their prayers, their Psalms are ours. In their religious life we see the analogy of ours; in the gradual, painful, yet sure unfolding of divine truth to them, we see the likeness of the same light dawning slowly on the Christian Church. They are truly 'our ensamples.' Through the reverses, the imperfections, the errors, the sins of His ancient Church, we see how "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past to our fathers," bringing out of all the highest of all blessings, as we trust that He may still through like vicissitudes to the Church of the present and to the Church of the future.

Political principles, we are told, are best studied in the history of classical antiquity, because they are there discussed and illustrated with a perfect abstraction from those particular associations which bias our judgment in modern and domestic instances. And so, in a still higher degree, in the history of the Jewish Church we find the principles of all religious and ecclesiastical parties developed not amidst names and events, which are themselves the subjects of vehement controversy, but in a narrative of acknowledged authority, free from all the bitterness of modern watchwords, and yet with a completeness and variety such as within the same compass could be found in no modern church or nation.

Reproduce this history with all the detail of which it is capable. Recall Abraham resting under the oak of Mamre; Joseph amidst the Egyptian monuments; Moses under the cliffs of Horeb; Joshua leaning on his outstretched spear; Samuel amidst his youthful scholars; David surrounded by his court and camp; Solomon in his eastern state; the wild, romantic, solitary figure of the great Elijah; "the goodly fellowship" of gifted seers, lifting up their strains of joy or sorrow, as they have been well described, like some great tragic chorus, as kingdom after kingdom falls to ruin, as hope after hope dies and is revived again. Represent in all their distinctness the several stages of the history, in its steady onward advance from Egypt

to Sinai, from Sinai to the Jordan, from the Jordan to Jerusalem, from the Law to the Judges, from the Judges to the Monarchy, from the Monarchy to the Prophets, from the Prophets to the great event to which not the Prophets only, but the yearnings of the whole nation had for ages borne witness.

Let us not fear lest our reverence should be diminished by finding these sacred names and high aspirations under the garb of Bedouin chiefs, and Egyptian slaves, and Oriental kings, and Syrian patriots. The contrast of the ancient inward spirit with the present degraded condition of the same outward forms is the best indication of the source from whence that spirit came. Let us not fear lest we should, by the surpassing interest of the story of the elder Church, be tempted to forget the end to which it leads us. The more we study the Jewish history, the more shall we feel that it is but the prelude of a vaster and loftier history, without which it would be itself unmeaning. The voice of the Old dispensation is pitched in too loud a key[a] for the ears of one small people. The place of the Jewish nation is too strait for the abode of thoughts which want a wider room in which to dwell. The drama, as it rolls on through its successive stages, is too majestic to end in anything short of a divine catastrophe.

[a] I am indebted for this expression to a striking sermon of Professor Archer Butler, (vol. i. p. 210).

This is a brief but necessary sketch of the first part of our subject. This is the ancient period of Ecclesiastical History. Its full treasures must be unfolded hereafter. Its accessories belong to other departments of study. The critical interpretation of the sacred books in which the history is contained falls under the province of general Theology and Exegesis; the explanation of the languages in which they are written I gladly leave to the Professor of Hebrew and the Professor of Greek. But the history itself of the Chosen People, from Abraham to the Apostles, belongs to this Chair by right; and, if health and strength are spared to me, shall also belong to it in fact.

End of Ancient Ecclesiastical History.

II. The fortunes, however, of the seed of Abraham after the flesh form but a small portion of the fortunes of his descendants after the spirit: they are, as I have said, but the introduction to the history which rises on their ruin. With the close of the Apostolic age the direct influence of the Chosen People expires; neither in religious nor in historical language can the Jewish race from this time forward be said to be charged with any divine message for the welfare of mankind. Individual instances of long endurance, of great genius, of lofty character, have indeed arisen amongst them in later times; but, since the day when the Galilean Apostle, St. John, slept his last sleep under the walls of Ephesus, no son of Israel has ever

exercised any widespread or lasting control over the general condition of mankind.

Beginning of Christian Ecclesiastical History.

We stand, therefore, at the close of the first century, like travellers on a mountain-ridge, when the river which they have followed through the hills is about to burst forth into the wide plain. It is the very likeness of that world-famous view from the range of the Lebanon over the forest and city of Damascus. The stream has hitherto flowed in its narrow channel—its course marked by the contrast which its green strip of vegetation presents to the desert mountains through which it descends. The further we advance, the more remarkable does the contrast become, — the mountains more bare, the river-bed more rich and green. At last its channel is contracted to the utmost limits; the cliffs on each side almost close it in; it breaks through, and over a wide extent, far as the eye can reach, it scatters a flood of vegetation and life, in the midst of which rise the towers and domes of the great city, the earliest and the latest type of human grandeur and civilization.

Such is the view, backwards, and forwards, and beneath our feet, which Ecclesiastical History presents to us, as we rest on the grave of the last Apostle and look over the coming ages of our course. The Church of God is no longer confined within the limits of a single nation. The life and the truth, concentrated, up to this point, within the narrow and unbending character of the Semitic race, has

been enlarged into the broad, fluctuating, boundless destinies of the sons of Japheth. The thin stream expands and loses itself more and more in the vast field of the history of the world. The Christian Church soon becomes merely another name for Christendom; and Christendom soon becomes merely another name for the most civilized, the most powerful, the most important nations of the modern habitable world.

Relations of Civil and Ecclesiastical History.

What, then, it may be asked, is the difference henceforward between Civil and Ecclesiastical History? How far are the duties of this Professorship separable from those of my distinguished friend who fills the Chair of Modern History?

To a great extent the two are inseparable; they cannot be torn asunder without infinite loss to both. It is indeed true that, in common parlance, Ecclesiastical History is often confined within limits so restricted as to render such a distinction only too easy. Of the numerous theological terms, of which the original sense has been defaced, marred, and clipped by the base currency of the world, few have suffered so much, in few has 'the gold become so dim, the most fine gold so changed,' as in the word "ecclesiastical." The substantive, from which it is derived, has fallen far below its ancient apostolical meaning, but the adjective "ecclesiastical," has fallen lower still. It has come to signify, not the religious, not the moral, not even the social or political interests of the Christian community, but

often the very opposite of these—its merely accidental, outward, ceremonial machinery. We call a contest for the retention or the abolition of vestments "ecclesiastical," not a contest for the retention or the abolition of the slave-trade. We include in "ecclesiastical history" the life of the most insignificant bishop or the most wicked of popes, not the life of the wisest of philosophers or the most Christian of kings. But such a limitation is as untenable in fact as it is untrue in theory. The very stones of the spiritual temple cry out against such a profanation of the rock from which they were hewn. If the Christian religion be a matter not of mint, anise, and cummin, but of justice, mercy, and truth; if the Christian Church be not a priestly caste, or a monastic order, or a little sect, or a handful of opinions, but 'the whole congregation' of 'faithful men,' 'dispersed throughout the world;' if the very word, which of old represented the Chosen "People" (λαὸς), is now to be found in the "laity;" if the ancient maxim be correct, *Ubi tres sunt laici, ibi est ecclesia;* then the range of the history of the Church is as wide as the range of the world which it was designed to penetrate, as the whole body which its name includes.

By a violent effort, no doubt, the two spheres can be kept apart; by a compromise, tacit or understood, the student of each may avoid looking the other in the face; under special circumstances, the intimate relation between the course of Chris-

tian society and the course of human affairs may be forgotten or set aside. Josephus the priest may pass over in absolute silence the new sect which arises in Galilee to disturb the Jewish hierarchy. Tacitus the philosopher may give nothing more than a momentary glance at the miserable superstition of the fanatics who called themselves Christians. Napoleon the conqueror, when asked on the coast of Syria to visit the Holy City, may make his haughty reply,—"Jerusalem does not enter into the line of my operations." But this is not the natural, nor the usual, course of the greatest examples both in ancient and modern times. Observe the description of the Jewish Church by the sacred historians. Consider the immense difference for all future ages, if the lives of Joshua, David, Solomon, and Elijah had been omitted, as unworthy of insertion, because they did not belong to the priestly tribe; if the Pentateuch had been confined to the Book of Leviticus; if the Books of Kings and Chronicles had limited themselves to the sayings and doings of Zadok and Abiathar, or even of Nathan and Gad. Remember also the early chroniclers of Europe—almost all of them at once the sole historians of their age, yet, even by purpose and profession, historians only of the Church. Take but one instance—the Venerable Bede. His "Ecclesiastical History of England" begins not with the arrival of Augustine, but with the first dawn of British civilization at the landing of Cæsar; and

for the period over which it extends, it is the sufficient and almost the only authority for the fortunes of the Anglo-Saxon commonwealth.

In later times, since history has become a distinct science, the same testimony is still borne by the highest works of genius and research, however much it may have been withheld by the mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, in this wide field. Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" is, in great part, however reluctantly or unconsciously, the history of "the rise and progress of the Christian Church." His true conception of the grandeur of his subject extorted from him that just concession which his own natural prejudice would have refused; and it was remarked not many years ago, by one then of note in this place, that up to that time England had produced no other ecclesiastical history worthy of the name. This reproach has since been removed by the great work of Dean Milman; but it is the distinguishing excellence of that very history that it embraces within its vast circumference the whole story of mediæval Europe. Even in that earlier period when the world and the Church were of necessity distinct and antagonistic, Arnold rightly perceived, and all subsequent labours in this field tend to the same result, that each will be best understood when blended in the common history of the Empire, which exercised so powerful an influence over the development of the Christian society within its bosom, whilst by that

society it was itself undermined and superseded. And the two chief historians of France and England in recent times—M. Guizot in his Lectures on French Civilization, Mr. Macaulay in his English History,—have both strongly brought out, as necessary parts of their dissertations or narratives, the religious influences, which by inferior writers of one class have been neglected, or by those of another class been rent from their natural context.

Never let us think that we can understand the history of the Church apart from the history of the world, any more than that we can separate the interests of the clergy from the interests of the laity, which are the interests of the Church at large.

How to adjust the relations of the two spheres to each other is almost as indefinite a task in history as it is in practice and in philosophy. In no age are they precisely the same. "Christians," it was well said by an ancient writer, "are to the world what the soul is to the body;" and it is one of the chief difficulties, as it is one of the chief delights of the historian of the Church, to detect this soul of the world under its various disguises, neither confounding the soul with the body, nor the body with the soul. Sometimes, as in the period of the Roman Empire, when this comparison was first made, the influence of one on the other is more by contagion; by atmosphere, even by contrast, than by direct intercourse. Sometimes the main interest of religious history hangs on an institution, like Epis-

Points of contact between Civil and Ecclesiastical History.

copacy; on a war, like the Crusades; on a person, like Luther. In some periods, as in the middle ages, the combination of the secular and religious elements will be effected by the political or the intellectual influence of the clergy. The lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury and the lives of the Prime Ministers of England are for five hundred years almost indivisible. The course of European revolution for nearly a thousand years moves round the throne of the Papacy. Or again, the rise of a new power or character will, even in these very ages, suddenly transfer the spiritual guidance of men to some high-minded ruler or gifted writer, who is for the time the true arbiter or interpreter of the interests and the feelings of Christendom. In the close of the thirteenth century, it is not a priest or a pope, but a king and an opponent of popes, who stands forward as the acknowledged representative of the Christian Church in Europe: St. Louis in France, not Gregory IX. at Rome. In the fourteenth century, it is not a schoolman or a bishop that we summon before us as the best exponent of mediæval Christianity; it is not the "seraphic" or the "angelic doctor," but the divine poet Dante, who reveals to us the feelings and thoughts of the whole age respecting this world and the next. And if we pass to our own country, he must be a blind guide who would take us through the English Reformation without seeing on every stage of it the impress of the iron will and broad aims of

Henry VIII.; or who would pourtray the English Church without recognising at every turn the likeness of the great Elizabeth. Or yet again, of all our brilliant English divines of the seventeenth century, there is not one who can be fairly said to have exercised as much influence over the popular theology of this nation, as has been undoubtedly exercised by a half-heretic, half-Puritan layman, the author of "Paradise Lost."

Such instances might be multiplied to any amount; but these indicate with sufficient precision the devious yet obvious path which, without losing sight of our wide horizon on the one hand, or without undue contraction on the other, gives us the true limits of Ecclesiastical History. "The kingdom of God is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Whatever explains the spread or the impediments of that leaven is in the province of the historian of the Church of Christ. He must know the general qualities of the materials which the fermenting element is to penetrate; he must specially be acquainted with the progress of the fermenting element itself. If we may for a moment return to our former position, and imagine ourselves overlooking the broad expanse into which the stream bursts forth from the mountains of its earlier stages, our purpose henceforth will be not so much to describe the products of the forest or the buildings of the city which have grown up on the banks of

Points of divergence between Civil and Ecclesiastical History.

the river, but to track the river itself through its various channels, under its overhanging thickets, through the populous streets and gardens to which it gives life; to see what are its main, what its tributary streams; what the nature of its waters; how far impregnated with new qualities, how far coloured by the various soils, vegetations, uses, through which they pass; to trace their secret flow, as they go softly through the regions which they fertilize; not finding them where they do not exist, not denying their power where they do exist; to welcome their sound in courses however tortuous; to acknowledge their value, however stained in their downward and onward passage. Difficult as it may often be to find the stream, yet when it is found it will guide us to the green pastures of this world's wilderness, and lead us beside the still waters.

Three landmarks, at least, may be mentioned, by which this course of Ecclesiastical History may be distinguished from that of history generally.

First, there are institutions, characters, ideas, words, which can be traced to the religious, especially to the Christian, element in man, and to nothing besides. There are virtues and truths now in the world, which can only be ascribed to the influence of Christian society; and there are corruptions of those virtues and of those truths which have produced crimes and errors to be ascribed

also, though remotely and indirectly, to the same source. There are events in the common course of history—revolutions, wars, divisions of races and nations—which in themselves can hardly be called religious, but which have at least one aspect distinctly religious. There are also institutions, customs, ceremonies, even vestures and forms of ritual, in which, though originally pagan or secular, Christian ideas have now become so crystallized as to be inseparable from them. All these it is the task of Ecclesiastical History to adjust and discriminate.

Secondly, in every age, even the worst, there has been beneath the surface an undercurrent of religious life and of active goodness, which it will be our duty to bring to light, as the true signs of a better world beyond, and of the Divine Presence abiding with us even here,—a Church, as it were, within a Church; a "remnant," to use the language of the older covenant; "a still small voice," which almost of its own nature escapes the notice of the historian whose attention is fixed on the wind, the earthquake, and the fire of the vast movements of the world.

Thirdly, the whole history of the Church, though usually flowing in the tracks marked out for it by the great national and geographical boundaries of the world, yet has a course, not always, and therefore not of necessity, identical with the channel of human civilization. In the history of the Church,

as in that of the world, in the history of the Christian Church, as in that of the Jewish, there is a distinct unity of parts, an onward progress from scene to scene, from act to act, towards an end yet distant and invisible; a unity and a progress such as gives consistency and point to what would else be a mere collection of isolated and disjointed facts.

Stages of the History of the Church.

Let us then, before we conclude, briefly notice the successive stages through which, eventually, our course of study must lead us, and the interest especially attaching to each.

1. The Transition from the Church of the Apostles to the Church of the Fathers.

The first period is that which contains the great question, almost the greatest which Ecclesiastical History has to answer,—How was the transition effected from the age of the Apostles to the age of the Fathers, from Christianity, as we see it in the New Testament, to Christianity, as we see it in the next century, and as, to a certain extent, we have seen it ever since?

No other change equally momentous has ever since affected its fortunes, yet none has ever been so silent and secret. The stream, in that most critical moment of its passage from the everlasting hills to the plain below, is lost to our view at the very point where we are most anxious to watch it; we may hear its struggles under the overarching rocks; we may catch its spray on the boughs that overlap its course; but the torrent itself we see not, or see only by imperfect glimpses. It is not so much a period for ecclesiastical History, as for

ecclesiastical controversy and conjecture. A fragment here, an allegory there; romances of unknown authorship; a handful of letters of which the genuineness of every portion is contested inch by inch; the summary examination of a Roman magistrate; the pleadings of one or two Christian Apologists; customs and opinions in the very act of change; last, but not least, the faded paintings, the broken sculptures, the rude epitaphs in the darkness of the catacombs,—these are the scanty, yet, perhaps from their very scantiness, the attractive, materials out of which the early Church must be reproduced, as it was working its way, in the literal sense of the word, "under ground,"—under camp and palace, under senate and forum,—'as unknown, yet well known; as dying, and behold it lives.'

This chasm once cleared, we find ourselves approaching the point where the story of the Church once more becomes History—becomes once more the history, not of an isolated community, or of isolated individuals, but of an organized society incorporated with the political systems of the world. Already, in the close of the second and beginning of the third century, the Churches of Africa, now bright for a few generations before their final and total eclipse, exhibit distinct characters on the scene. They are the stepping-stones by which we cross from the obscure to the clear, from chaos to order. The African Churches.

But the first great outward event of the actual

2. The conversion of the Empire; and the Eastern Church.

history of the Church is its conversion of the Empire; and, in close connection with this, its first wide sphere in the face of mankind, is the Oriental world, out of which it sprang, and in which the external forms of its early organization can still be most clearly studied. In Antioch, in Alexandria, in and around Constantinople, lie its most active heresies, its chief councils, its leading characters: and in the usages of the ancient systems which have grown up on that soil—Coptic, Greek, Nestorian, Russian—we may still trace the relics, the fossilized relics, of the old Imperial Church. But the stir of an onward movement soon ceases to be heard after the clatter and repose of its first victory. One only great convulsion has broken the stagnation of the Eastern forms of Christianity—itself spurious, antagonistic, retrograde, yet a development, and reaction, out of those very forms. One great character has in later years burst out of those primeval seats of religion—call him Prophet, impostor, fanatic, reformer, Antichrist; yet Mahomet, and the religion of Mahomet, whether by way of contrast or resemblance, must always arrest the attention and demand the explanation of any true historian of the Church of Christ.

Mahometanism.

With the exception, however, of this one startling episode, this one rebound of the ancient Semitic fervour into the fold of the Gentile Churches, Eastern Christianity has but little to detain us. It contains only the second act of the drama; it

was but the temporary halting-place of the great spiritual migration which, from the day that Abraham turned his face away from the rising of the sun, has been stepping steadily westward.

3. Invasion of the Barbarians; and the Latin Church.

Another and a wider sphere was in store for the progress of the Church than its own native regions; another and a nobler conquest than that of its old worn-out enemy on the tottering throne of the Cæsars. The Gothic tribes descended on the ancient world; the fabric of civilized society was dissolved in the mighty crisis; the Fathers of modern Europe were to be moulded, subdued, educated. By whom was this great work effected? Not by the Empire, —it had fled to the Bosphorus; not by the Eastern Church;—it had converted many for a time, but it retained its permanent hold only on one, and that till quite recently the least important, of the northern races. In the Western, Latin, Roman clergy, in the missionaries who went forth to Gaul, to Britain, and to Germany, the barbarians found their first masters; in the work of controlling and resisting the fierce soldiers of the Teutonic tribes lay the main work, the real foundation, the chief temptation of the Papacy. From the day when Leo III. placed the crown of the new, Holy, Roman, German empire on the head of Charlemagne, the stream of human progress and the stream of Christian life, with whatever interruptions, eddies, counter-currents, flowed during the next seven centuries in the same channel. As the history of the earlier stages revolved

The Papacy.

round the characters of the Fathers or of the Emperors, so the history of the Middle Ages, with all their crimes and virtues, revolved (it is at once the confession of their weakness and their strength) round the character and policy of the Popes. What good they did, and what good they failed to do; by what means they rose, and by what they fell, during that long period of their power,—is the main question by which their claims must be tested.

4. The Reformation.

And now a new revolution was at hand, almost as terrible in its appearance, and as trying in its results, as any that had gone before. The fountains of the great deep were again broken up. New wants and old evils had met together. The failure of the Crusades had shaken men's belief in holy places. Long abuses had shaken their belief in Popes, bishops, monasteries, sacraments, and saints. The revival of ancient learning had revealed truth under new forms. The invention of printing had raised up a new order of scribes, expounders, readers, writers, clergy. Institutions, which had guided the world for a thousand years, now decayed and out of joint, gave way at the moment when they were most needed. Was it possible that the Christian Church should meet these trials as it had met those which had gone before? It had lived through the fall of Jerusalem; it had lived through the Ten persecutions; it had lived through its amalgamation with the Empire; it had lived through the invasion of the barbarians: but could it live through the

struggles of internal dissolution? could it live through the shipwreck of the whole outward fabric of its existence? could the planks of the vessel, scattered on the face of the raging flood, be so put together again as to form any shelter from the storm, any home on the waters? Did the history of the Church come to an end, as many thought it would, when its ancient organization came to an end, in the great change of the Reformation?

Protestantism.

We know that it still lived on. That it survived at all, is the best proof which it has yet presented of its inherent vitality; that it survived, in a purified form, is the best pledge of its future success. To Ancient Christianity, to Byzantine Christianity, to Roman Christianity, was now added the fourth and equally unmistakeable form of Protestant Christianity: like the others, clothed in an outward shape of its own, and confining itself specially to distinct branches of the European family, yet also penetrating with its spirit institutions and nations outwardly most repugnant to it. Amidst many conflicts, therefore, Ecclesiastical History still continues in the general tracks that were opened for it in the sixteenth century. Whatever political troubles have agitated the world since that time, and whatever changes may be fermenting in the inner heart and mind of the Church, none has since altered its outward aspect and divisions. But there is one wide difference between the history of Christendom as it was before and as it has been since

the Reformation. Henceforward it is impossible to follow its course as a whole: each country must have its own ecclesiastical as well as its own civil history. Italy...Spain...Sweden...Holland...Geneva ...Scotland...the very names have each, in theological language, a peculiar pathos and significance imparted by the Reformation. In each that great event awakened a different note, as it traversed their several chords. Still there are three countries in which, beyond all others, the religious history of Europe has been specially carried on.

The German Church.

Germany,...the seat of the original movement, has never lost the hold which it then first acquired on the reason and imagination of mankind. But its influence, whether for good or evil, has been almost too impalpable to attach itself to any course of events or any definite outward character.

The French Church and the French Revolution.

It is in France that the fortunes of Christianity during the last three centuries have been most visibly represented in the brightest and in the darkest colours. The Gallican Church, first the most brilliant in Europe, brilliant alike in its works of active mercy and in its almost Augustan age of great divines,—Vincent of Paul, Bossuet, Fenelon, Pascal,—lived to become the miserable parent, and then the victim, of the great convulsion which, whilst it shook the belief of the whole of Christendom, in France for eleven years suppressed it altogether. The French Revolution

must always be considered as an epoch in the religious history of man. Not only was its hostility to the Christian faith the most direct that the world has seen since the days of Julian; not only did it spring, in great measure, out of the corrupt state of the French clergy—the Church of Dubois, of Maury, Sieyes, and Talleyrand; but it possessed in itself that frightful energy which, as has been truly observed by its latest exponent[a], can only be likened to the propagation of a new religion,—the wild fanaticism, the proselytism, the self-devotion, the crimes, as though of a Western Mahometanism, —of what its own disciples have often called it, an imitation, a parody, a new, distorted edition of the Gospel. It was itself swallowed up in the gulf which it had created. Its traces on European religion have, to all outward appearance, been almost effaced. But as a moral warning to all existing Churches it can never be overlooked; as an interpreter of the great religious storms of former ages it is most instructive; in the inward sifting and trial of the religious thoughts of men, its effects can even now be felt, not only in the country from which it sprang, but even in those most removed from its immediate influence.

And this leads us finally to the third great ecclesiastical system which stands alone and apart, yet with its own peculiar mission, in the general fortunes of the Western Church. At least for English-

[a] Tocqueville: L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution, c. iii.

men, no ecclesiastical history since the Reformation can be so instructive as that of our own Church of England. To see how, out of that wide shipwreck, the fragments of our vessel were again pieced together—how far it has realized the essential condition of the ark on the stormy waters—how far it has contained within itself the necessary though heterogeneous elements of our national faith and character—how far it may still hope to do so—what is its connection with the past, what its hold upon the future—this is the last and most important task of the English ecclesiastical historian. The peculiar constitution of our State has borne the brunt and survived the shock of the French Revolution: it is the hope of the peculiar constitution of our Church, that it should in like manner meet, overcome, and absorb the shock of the new thoughts and feelings to which, directly or indirectly, that last of European movements has given birth.

The Church of England.

I have been induced thus, at the outset, to dwell on this broad extent of prospect, first, because it is only by a just appreciation of the whole that any part can be properly understood; and secondly, because I wish to impress on my hearers the many points of contact which Ecclesiastical History presents to the various studies of this place. If at times it is impossible not to be oppressed with the load which has to be taken from the stores of the Pilgrim's Palace, it is a satisfaction to remember that there are many travellers passing along the

Conclusion.

same road, who will, almost of necessity, lighten the burden and cheer the journey by their common interest in the treasures borne away.

One such has been before me in this path—my lamented predecessor.

The late Professor Hussey.

Personally he was almost unknown to me. In our mode of dealing with the subject before us we might have widely differed. But I cannot enter on this office, without bearing my humble testimony to the conscientious industry with which, as I have heard from those who attended his lectures, he guided them over the rugged way which he had chosen for them; without expressing my grateful sense of the characteristic forethought and munificence with which he bequeathed to this Chair the valuable endowment of his library. Still more, I should be doing wrong both to him and to the University, were I not to dwell for a moment on what I have always understood was the chief ground of the respect which he commanded in this place. He was emphatically a "just man;" he possessed in an eminent degree that rare gift of public integrity and fairness, too rare in the world, too rare in the Church, too rare in Ecclesiastical History, too rare even in great seats of learning, not to be noticed when it comes before us; especially when, as in the present case, it passes away with the marked approbation and regret of all who witnessed it. In times of much angry controversy, he never turned aside from his straightforward course to excite

needless alarms. He never stooped to win theological favour by attacking unpopular names. He never allowed any religious sentiment or fancy to interfere with his manly and severe sense of truth and duty. He shewed that it was possible to be impartial without weakness, and orthodox without bitterness. May the University long remember that such was the character which she delighted to honour; may his successors in this Chair be encouraged and enabled to act and to speak, in this most important respect, according to his example.

THE STUDY

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

LECTURE II.

THE STUDY

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

Dryness of Ecclesiastical History.

It is sometimes said, that of all historical studies that of Ecclesiastical History is the most repulsive. We seem to be set down in the valley of the Prophet's vision,—strewn with bones, and behold they are "very many," and "very dry;" skeletons of creeds, of churches, of institutions; trodden and traversed by the feet of travellers again and again; the scapegoat of one age lying lifeless by the scapegoat of the next; rusty controversies, 'of which the locks have been turned so often that they can now neither be opened nor shut;' craters of extinct volcanoes, which once filled the world with their noise, and are now dead and cold; the salt shores of a barren sea, which throws up again dead and withered the branches which the river of life had cast into it full of beauty and verdure,—the very reverse of that green prospect which I set before you in my opening Lecture; the more dreary, it may be said, from the wide extent into which it spreads. "How are we to give interest to such a task; how shall the heal-

ing streams penetrate into those dead waters; how shall those dry bones live?"

Remedy to be found in an Historical view of the Church.

There may be many answers to this question, but I shall content myself with the most obvious. *Remember, that of all these things there is a history.* These relics, these institutions, these characters, (take them at their worst,) had each a part to play amongst mankind; they were men of flesh and blood like ourselves, or they dwelt with men of flesh and blood like ourselves; they were living human spirits, or they were the instruments of living human spirits; however decayed, however antiquated they may be, yet in their very age they have an interest which no novelty can give. We cannot, it is true, enter on Ecclesiastical History, whether in its wider or its narrower sense, with the feeling of fresh enthusiasm which inspires the discoverers of unexplored regions, whether of science or history, "the first who ever burst into the silent sea," or secluded ruins, which no eye of man has seen before. But we can enter upon it with the yet deeper delight which fills our minds, as we feel rising beneath our feet the ground of the Seven Hills; or as we gaze, knowing that hundreds of thousands have gazed before us, on the everlasting outline of the Pyramids. So view the history of the Church, even in its most lifeless and withered forms; so view it as part of a whole, as once having lived, as living still in ourselves, as destined to live on in future generations; so pro-

phesy over its dry bones as they lie scattered and disjointed over the surface of the world,—and we shall soon hear "a noise and a shaking," and "the bones will come together," each to each, and "the breath will come into them, and they will live, and stand up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Let me point out how this remedy is involved in the very nature of the case. Take, for example, the history of doctrines and opinions. Many ecclesiastical histories contain little else; half of theology is taken up in stating them. How immensely do they gain in liveliness, in power, in the capacity of being understood and appreciated, if we view them through the medium of the lives, characters, and circumstances of those who received and taught them. Trace the actual course of any opinion or dogma; see the influences by which it was coloured; compare the relative importance attached to it at one period or another; ask how far the words in which it has been expressed convey the same or a different meaning to us or to our fathers; discover, if possible, its fountain-head in the time, the country, or the person in which it first originated. Look at Augustinianism as it arose in the mind of Augustine; at Lutheranism as it was conceived by Luther; at Wesleyanism as it was set forth by Wesley. It will cease to be a phantom, it will speak to us as a man: if it is an enemy, we shall slay it more easily; if a friend, we shall embrace it more warmly.

I. History of Doctrines.

Still more is this the case with the kindred subject of confessions and articles of faith. If we regard them merely in their cut and dried results, they may indeed serve many useful ends; they supply stakes to make hedges against intruders, planks to cross our enemy's trenches, faggots to burn heretics. But go to the soil from which they sprang. Watch them in their wild, native, luxuriant growth. Observe the moss which has grown over their stems, the bough rent away there and grafted in here, the branches inextricably intertwined with adjacent thickets. So regarded, they will not be less, but more of a shelter; we shall not value them the less, for understanding them better. Figure to yourselves, as you read any creeds or confessions, the lips by which they were first uttered, the hands by which they were first written. Hear the Apostles' Creed, as it summed up in its few simple sentences the belief of the Roman martyrs. Watch the Nicene bishops meeting each other, and their opponents, and the great Emperor Constantine, for the first time, on the shores of the Bithynian lake. Listen to the triumphant war-songs of Clovis over the vanquished Arians of France and Spain, and you will catch with a clearer understanding the true significance of their echo in the old Latin hymn, *Quicunque vult*, then first welcomed into Europe. Read the Articles of the English Church in their successive mutilations, excrescences, variations. Go to that most precious of collegiate li-

II. History of Creeds and Articles.

braries in the sister University, where the venerable autograph which contains them may still be seen; look at the signatures of those whose names are affixed; conceive the persons whom those names represent; imagine them, as any one who has ever taken part in any council, or commission, or committee, or conclave of any kind whatever, can and must imagine them; one sacrificing, another insisting on, a favourite expression; a new turn given to one sentence, a charitable colour thrown over another; the edge of a sharp exclusion blunted by one party; the sting of a bitter sarcasm drawn by another. Start from this view, as certain as it can be made by the facts of human nature and by the facts of history, both universal and particular. Regard confessions of faith in this, their only true, historical light, and in that light many a new glimpse will be obtained of their practical justice and moderation; many a harsh expression will be explained; many a superfluous scruple of honest minds will vanish away; many a foolish controversy will be extinguished for ever.

III. History of events and persons.

But the proper material for Ecclesiastical History is, after all, not institutions or opinions, but events and persons. Leviticus and the Proverbs have their own special value, but they are not reckoned amongst the "historical books" of the Jewish Church. Bingham's learned work, however useful as an auxiliary, contains "the antiquities" only, not the history, of the Christian Church. It is on its

special incidents and characters that the life-blood of that history depends. How can we best make ourselves acquainted with these?

General study.

In this, as in so many other branches of knowledge, the question can only be fully answered in each particular case. Whatever way will best enable each man in his own peculiar situation, character, and opportunities, to remember, and understand, and profit, that is to him the best, and can be taught only by consulting his own experience.

For general readers, the best general counsel which can be given is that which I have already indicated. Study the history of the Church in connexion with the collateral subjects with which it is bound up; let us keep our eyes and ears open to the religious aspects of history, and they will flow in upon us, we know not whence, or how.

Let us read also, whatever we do read, as elsewhere, so here, in the works of eminent historians rather than in those of writers without a name and without a character; and yet more, read, if possible, works which describe what they describe at length and in detail, and which therefore leave a lasting impression on the memory and imagination, rather than in the crowded pages of meagre abstracts, which are forgotten as soon as read. Great works and full works, not small works and short works, are in the end the best economy of time as well as of everything else.

But this leads me to what is, on the whole, the

most instructive, if not the only course, which can be followed in a Chair like this, for any who wish, in the true sense of the word, to be "students" of Ecclesiastical History. We cannot attempt to describe or to study every event in detail, for time and labour would fail; we need not do it compendiously, for this has been done to our hands again and again, and of late years with such candour and research as to render any further work of the kind superfluous. One method remains to us, at once the most obvious and the most interesting. Lay aside the lesser events, or read them only so far as to preserve a continuous knowledge of the general thread of the history: it is for this purpose that the briefer narratives, when clearly and ably written, are of substantial use. But study the greater events, scenes, places, and revolutions, in all the detail in which they can be represented to us.

Detailed study of great events.

Take, for example, the General Councils of the Church. They are the pitched battles of Ecclesiastical History. Ask yourselves the same questions as you would about the battles of military history. Ask when, and where, and why they were fought. Put before your minds all the influences of the age which there were confronted and concentrated from different quarters as in one common focus. See why they were summoned to Nicæa, to Constance, to Trent: the locality often contains here, as in actual battles, the key of their position, and easily connects the Ecclesiastical History of the age with its general

The Councils.

history and geography. Look at the long procession as it enters the scene of assembly; see who was present and who was absent. Let us make ourselves acquainted with the several characters there brought together, so that we may recognise them as old friends if we meet them again elsewhere. Study their decrees, as expositions of the prevailing sentiments of the time; study them, as a recent historian has advised us to study the statutes of our own ancient Parliaments; see what evils are most condemned, and what evils are left uncondemned; observe how far their injunctions are still obeyed, or how far set at nought, and ask in each case the reason why. Read them, as I have just now noticed, with the knowledge given to us by our own experience of all synods of all kinds; read them with the knowledge which each gives of every other. Do this for any one Council, and you will have made a deep hole into Ecclesiastical History.

Detailed study of great men.

And still more let this same rule be followed with regard to persons. Take any one character. It may be, we shall be attracted towards him by some accidental connexion; it may, and should rather be, on account of his preeminent greatness. Do not let him leave you till you have, at any rate, retained some one distinctive feature by which you will know him again in the multitudes amongst which he will else be lost; some feature of mind or person which he has, and which others have not.

Many of us must have read, in part at least, Ne-

ander's "History of the Christian Church," and will have admired, as every one must admire, the depth, the tenderness, the delicacy of Christian sentiment which pervades the whole of his vast work, and fulfils his own beautiful motto, "It is the heart which makes the theologian,"—*Pectus theologum facit.* Yet, without disparaging the value of such a mirror of Christian history in such a character, we cannot help feeling that it is often rather the theologian than the historian whose words we read; that it is often rather the thoughts, than the actual persons and deeds of men, that he is describing to us. They are the ghosts of Ossian, rather than the heroes of Homer; they are refined, they are spiritualized to that degree, that their personality almost vanishes; the stars of heaven shine through them; but we have no hold on their earthly frames; we can trace no human lineaments in their features as they pass before us. Let us endeavour to fill up this outline; however much of deeper interest it may have for the more philosophical mind, it will hardly lay hold on the memory or the affections of the more ordinary student, unless it is brought closer to our grasp. How differently we learn to estimate even Neander himself, according as we merely regard him as a thinker of holy thoughts, the writer of a good book, or as we see the venerable historian in his own proper person,—his black, shaggy, overhanging eyebrows and his strong Jewish physiognomy revealing the nation and religion to

Neander and his History of the Church.

which he first belonged; working at his history night and day with insatiable ardour to shew to his unconverted countrymen what Christianity really was; abstracted from all thought of worldly cares, of food, and dress, and money, and time; living, dying, buried in the affections, in the arms of his devoted pupils. What by proximity of time we are enabled to do for the historian, true research usually enables us to do for those whom he describes. Watch their first appearance, their education, their conflicts, their death-beds. Observe their relative position to each other; see what one did which another would not have done, what one thought or said which to another would have been heretical or superstitious; or, lastly, what all did, and said, and thought in common.

Representation of the distinction of characters.

If I were to name one especial excellence amongst the many which render Mr. Grote's great achievement so important an addition, not merely to Grecian history, but to all historical study, of whatever kind, it would be the keen discrimination with which he presents, not merely distinct characters, but distinct types of character in the lineage of the Grecian mind, whom before we had been accustomed to regard much as we usually regard the fixed stars—their distance from each other being lost in comparison with the distance from ourselves. This marked contrast and combination of characters is exactly what is most needed in the history of the Church. Here, even more than in common

history, we are apt to blend together the different persons of the story under one common class. Yet here, even more than in common history, we ought to keep each separate from each, if we would learn the lessons they have to teach to the world. Of ordinary readers, how few there are to whom the Fathers, the Schoolmen, nay, even the Reformers, although divided as classes, are not confounded as individuals! How few there are who can trace the descent, step by step, as the genealogy (so to speak) of the Church is unrolled before us. From Ignatius to Cyprian, from Origen to Athanasius, from Athanasius to Augustine, from Augustine to Bernard, from Bernard to Aquinas, to Tauler, to Luther, how wide are the gaps, how necessary the connexion, how startling the difference! Or, again, in the more outward history, how various are the trains of association awakened by the successive representatives of the Empire and of the Papacy, in Constantine, in Clovis, in Charlemagne, in Barbarossa, in Charles V.; or, on the other hand, in Gregory I., in Gregory VII., in Innocent III., in Leo X., in Sixtus V.! Each has his own message to deliver; each has his own work to perform; each is a link in that manifold chain which conveys the electric spark from the first to the nineteenth century. It was a happy thought of Eusebius, that he would trace the history of the various ancient Churches through the succession of Bishops, who in those early times were lite-

rally the personifications of their flocks. It is a yet happier arrangement, whenever the interest of the history of the whole Church can be concentrated in the still grander succession of those who have stood forth as the overseers and guides of Christendom, whether by good or bad eminence,—not only from generation to generation, but from century to century, and from age to age.

Uses of this method.

It is not without reason that I have thus recommended for your study the selection of the detailed representation of some one event, person, or institution of commanding interest. Not only will it furnish us with the best mode of giving life to what is often a barren labour, but it will also be the best safeguard against many of the evils with which the student of Ecclesiastical History is beset.

I. Gradation of importance in ecclesiastical subjects.

First, it is always useful to be reminded of the various degrees of importance in the different events and institutions of the Church. There is no more common error of theological students than to regard everything connected with religion as of equal significance. They will allow of no light or shade, no difference between things essential and things unessential, no proportion between means and ends, between things moral and things ceremonial, between things doubtful and things certain. Against this *levelling* tendency of ecclesiastical study, History lifts up a warning which may be heeded when all else fails. Believe that Athanasius and Augustine are worthier objects of

interest than Flavian or Optatus, and you will have made one step towards believing that there is a gradation of importance in the several controversies in which the Church has been engaged. Believe that the invasion and conversion of the barbarians was the great crisis and work of mediæval religion, and you will have made a step towards believing that the Church of Christ has higher aims than the disputes respecting the observance of Easter, or the shape of the clerical tonsure.

II. Combination of Civil and Ecclesiastical History.

Secondly, this combination of study round one main object solves, in part, the difficulty which I noticed in my first Lecture, respecting the relations of Civil and Ecclesiastical History. The subordinate persons and events of each may be easily divided from one another. But the greater characters of necessity combine both elements; they are the meeting-points of the two spheres of human life; they rise above the point of divergence; they shew that in the most important moments of social and individual action, all the influences of life, physical, intellectual, political, moral, come together: in these cases, whatever we may do elsewhere, we cannot disentangle the web without breaking it. Those divisions of history which we sometimes see under the heads of "civil and military," "political" and "religious," though convenient for common wars or common controversies, yet utterly fail when they touch an age like the Reformation,—though possible in the case of Melancthon or Jeremy Taylor, break down

entirely when applied to Luther or Oliver Cromwell. The unity of purpose which is the main characteristic of any great mind, the close connexion of leading ideas which is the main interest of any great age, is grievously marred when we have to seek the disjointed fragments from different quarters, and take up over and over again the thread of the same interrupted story.

III. Caution against partiality.

Thirdly, this same method will be a protection against the prevailing sin of ecclesiastical historians —exclusiveness and partiality.

It is well-known that Eusebius openly avows his intention of relating only those incidents in the lives of the martyrs of Palestine which would reflect credit on the Church, and that Milner constructs his whole history on the principle that he will omit all mention of ecclesiastical wickedness, and record only the specimens of ecclesiastical virtue. Such a process, however edifying and useful for certain purposes, yet is never wholly safe, and happily is rendered almost impossible as soon as we wish to consider the full character and bearings of any person or institution on which we are engaged. If once we are inspired with a genuine desire of seeing the man as he really was, if he was worth being seen at all, we shall not be satisfied unless we see him altogether. Here, as in so many other respects, the sacred history of the Jewish Church is our best example. We there see not the half, but the whole of David. We are told not only of

his goodness, but of his sins; and we can there judge how wonderfully the history of the Church has gained by such a frank disclosure: how thin, how pale in comparison, would that biography have been, had the darker side been suppressed and the bright side only exhibited. Such a completeness of view we are almost driven to take when we explore, not one, but all the sources whence our knowledge can be drawn. We may still lament that the story of the lion is so often told only by the man; that the lives and opinions of heretics can be traced only in the writings of the orthodox; that the clergy have been so often the sole historians of the crimes of the laity. But we shall have learned at least to know that there is another side, even when that side has been torn away or lost. We shall acquiesce in the judgment of Fleury when he sums up the character of Constantine, by telling us that we may safely believe all that Zosimus the pagan says in his praise, and all that Eusebius the bishop says to his blame. We shall often find some ancient fragment or forgotten parchment, like that which vindicates Edwy and Elgiva from the almost unanimous calumny of their monastic enemies. We shall see that in the original biographies of Becket, partial though they be, enough escapes to reveal that he is not the faultless hero represented to us in modern martyrology.

The mere perusal of the indiscriminate praise and abuse lavished on the same person by two opposite

historians is instructive even for our guidance in the present. The mere collection of the cross-fire of vituperation from modern partisans is useful as teaching us distrust in any one-sided view of the past. Selden, who knew well the danger and falsehood of extremes, confines his advice on "ecclesiastical story" to this single point,—to study the exaggerated statements of Baronius on the one side, and of the Magdeburg Centuriators on the other.. "and be our own judges." Nor let any one suppose that this conflict of evidence renders the attainment of certainty impossible. Doubtless there are many points both in sacred and in common history, both in civil and ecclesiastical records, where we must be content to remain in suspense. History will have left half its work undone, if it does not teach us humility and caution. But essential truth can almost always be found—truth of all kinds can with due research be usually found: she lies, no doubt, in a well; but we may be sure that she is there, if we dig deep enough. In this labour teachers and students must all work together. What one cannot discover, many at work on the same point can often prove beyond doubt. Like Napoleon and his comrades, when lost in the quicksands of the Red Sea, let each ride out a different way, and the first that comes to firm ground, bid the others halt and follow him.

IV. Reference to original authorities.

Fourthly, this method of study will enable us all from time to time to set our feet on that firmest of

all ground—which every student of history ought to touch once in his life—original authorities. We cannot do it always, but by the mere necessity of exploring any one subject to the bottom, we must do it at times. It will be a constant charm of the history of the Chosen People, that there we shall rarely be absent from, at any rate, the nearest approaches which can now be made to the events described. But it will be a charm also in the minute investigation of any point in the later history, that, however well told by modern compilers, there is almost sure to be something in the original records which we should else have overlooked. How inestimable are the fragments of Hegesippus, and the Epistle of the Church of Lyons, embedded in the rhetoric of Eusebius! How life-like, in the dead partisanship of Strype, are the letters, injunctions, and narratives of the actors whose words and deeds he so feebly undertakes to represent.

And original records are not confined merely to contemporaneous histories, nor even to contemporaneous literature, sermons, poems, laws, decrees. Study the actual statues and portraits of the men, the sculptures and pictures of the events: if they do not give us the precise image of the persons and things themselves, they give us at least the image left on those who came nearest to them. Study their monuments, their gravestones, their epitaphs, on the spots where they lie. Study, if possible,

the scenes of the events, their aspect, their architecture, their geography; the tradition which has survived the history, the legend which has survived the tradition; the mountain, the stream, the shapeless stone, which has survived even history, and tradition, and legend.

Graves of the Covenanters.

Take two examples instead of a hundred. There are few more interesting episodes in modern Ecclesiastical History than that of the Scottish Covenanters. But the school in which that episode must be studied is Scotland itself. The caves, and moors, and moss-hags of the Western Lowlands; the tales which linger still, of the black charger of Claverhouse, of the strange encounters with the Evil one, of the cry of the plover and peewit round the encampments on the hill-side, are more instructive than many books. The rude gravestones which mark the spots where those were laid who bore testimony to "the covenanted work of reformation, and Christ's kingly government of His house," bring before us in the most lively, because in the most condensed, authentic, original form, the excited feeling of the time and the most peculiar traits of the religion of the Scottish people; the independence, the fervour, the fierceness of the age, national alike in its patience of suffering, in its thirst for vengeance, in its investment of the narrowest questions of discipline and ceremony with the sacredness of universal principles. We almost fancy that we see the survivors of the dead spelling and scoop-

ing out their savage rhymes on the simple monuments; each catching from each the epithets, the texts, the names, almost Homeric in the simplicity and the sameness with which they are repeated on those lonely tombstones from shore to shore of the Scottish kingdom.

The Catacombs.

Or turn to a similar instance, of kindred but wider interest. What insight into the familiar feelings and thoughts of the primitive ages of the Church can be compared to that afforded by the Roman catacombs! Unnoticed by Gibbon, unknown to Mosheim, they yet give us a likeness of the life of those early times beyond any that we receive from any of the written authorities on which Gibbon and Mosheim rest. Their very structure is significant; their vast extent, their labyrinthine darkness, their stifling atmosphere, are a standing proof both of the rapid spread of the Christian conversions, and of the active fury of the heathen persecutions. The subjects of the sculptures and paintings place before us the exact ideas with which the first Christians were familiar; they remind us, by what they do not contain, of the ideas with which the first Christians were not familiar. We see with our own eyes the parables and the miracles, and the stories from the Old Testament, which sustained the courage of the early martyrs, and the innocent festivities of the early feasts of Christian love. The barbarous style of the sculptures, the bad spelling, the coarse engraving of the epitaphs, impresses upon

us more clearly than any sermon the truth that God chose the weak, and base, and despised things of the world to bring to nought the things which are mighty. He who is thoroughly steeped in the imagery of the catacombs, will be nearer to the thoughts of the early Church than he who has learned by heart the most elaborate treatise even of Tertullian or of Origen.

Opportunities for this study.

And now, having set before you the method of the study which, for all who enter upon it seriously, and in its general features even for all who enter upon it superficially, is the most desirable, let me briefly remind you of some of the special opportunities which we ourselves possess for following up the study at all.

I. In the Church of England.

First, if there ever was a Church in which Ecclesiastical History might be expected to flourish, it is the English. Unlike almost all the other Churches of Europe, alone in its constitution, in its origin, in its formularies, it touches all the religious elements which have divided Christendom. He may be a true son of the Church of England who is able to throw himself into the study of the first Four Councils to which the statutes of our constitution refer, or of the mediæval times in which our cathedrals and parishes were born and nurtured. He also may be a true son of the same, who is able to hail as fellow-workers the great Reformers of Wittenberg, of Geneva, and of Zurich, whence flowed so strong an influence over at least half of our present

formularies. But he is the truest son of all who, in the spirit of this union, feels himself free to sympathize with the several elements and principles of good which the Church of England has thus combined—who knows that the strength of a national Church, especially of the Church of a nation like ours, lies in the fact that it has never been surrendered exclusively to any one theological influence, and that the Christian faith which it has inherited from all is greater than the differences which it has inherited from each.

The Prayer-book, as it stands, is a long gallery of Ecclesiastical History, which, to be understood and enjoyed thoroughly, absolutely compels a knowledge of the greatest events and names of all periods of the Christian Church. To Ambrose we owe our *Te Deum;* Charlemagne breaks the silence of our ordination-prayers by the *Veni Creator Spiritus.* The Persecutions have given us one creed, and the Empire another. The name of the first great patriarch of the Byzantine Church closes our daily service; the Litany is the bequest of the first great patriarch of the Latin Church, amidst the terrors of the Roman pestilence. The Fathers and Popes wrote our collects for Sundays; the Reformers wrote our collects for saints' days. Our highest act of worship is stamped by the footsteps of every age, from the first Apostolical liturgy to the rapid fluctuations of the counsellors of Edward, and the conciliating policy of Elizabeth, and the reactionary zeal of the

Restoration. The more comprehensive, the more free, the more impartial is our study of any or every branch of Ecclesiastical History, the more will it be in accordance with the spirit and with the letter of the Church of England.

II. In the University of Oxford.

Secondly, I cannot forbear to notice the special advantages vouchsafed to all of us in this place as members of this great University. Its libraries enable us to pursue our cross-examination of ancient witnesses, our reproduction of ancient scenes and events through all the appliances of antiquarian and artistic knowledge. Its peculiar mixture of various characters and callings, students and studies, invites us to that fusion of lay and clerical, of modern and ancient, of common and sacred, which is so vital to a full understanding of our subject, yet which would be so easily lost in institutions more purely theological, more strictly professional. But, besides all this, the very place itself is teeming with history, if not of the more universal Church, yet of the Church of our own country, to which, sooner or later, our studies must be turned.

In those studies, I trust that we shall find that "Alfred the Great, our first Founder," did well to plant his seat of learning beside the venerable shrine of St. Frideswide. We shall be the better able to comprehend Duns Scotus and the schoolmen, as we stand in the ancient quadrangle of Merton, or listen to the dim traditions of Brase-

nose. Mediæval theology and practice will stand out clearly in the quaint customs of Queen's and the romantic origin of All Souls. The founders of Exeter and of New College will give us a true likeness of mediæval prelates,—architects, warriors, statesmen, and bishops all in one. Wycliffe will assume a more distinct shape and form, to those who trace his local habitation as Master of Balliol. Erasmus will not soon die out of our recollection, when we remember the little college of Corpus, which he hoped would be to Great Britain what the Mausoleum was to Caria, and what the Pyramids were to Egypt. The unfinished splendour of Christ Church is the enduring monument of the magnificence and of the fall of Wolsey. The Reformation will not be unaptly represented to us in the day when the quadrangles were knee-deep in the torn leaves of the scholastic divines, or when Ridley and Latimer suffered for their faith beside the gateway of Bocardo. Its successive reactions and advances have left their traces in the foundation of Wadham, Trinity, and Jesus. From St. John's began the counter-reformation of Laud. Magdalen and University are the two memorials of resistance and subservience to James II. From Lincoln and Pembroke sprang the great religious movement of Wesley and Whitfield; and Oriel will not allow us to forget that we, too, have witnessed a like movement in our own day, of various forms and various results, already become historical, which will at

least help us to appreciate such events in former times, and to remember that we, too, are parts of the Ecclesiastical History of our country.

III. In active clerical life.

Finally, this leads us to the reflection that there will be probably many amongst my hearers who are looking forward to an active life in the various ministrations, near and distant, of the English Church. They, too, will have in their different localities, in those from which they came hither, in those to which they will go hence, the same atmosphere of ancient times surrounding them, wherever their lot be cast. Our Ecclesiastical History is not confined to Oxford, or to any one sacred city. Everywhere we shall find the wellsprings and the streams of the Christian history of England running beneath our feet; everywhere something to keep alive in our recollections the growth and spread of the Christianity of this great country. Almost every church and churchyard has its own antiquities. Almost every parish and every sect has its own strange spiritual experiences, past or present. In almost every county and province we may study those august trophies of Ecclesiastical History—instructive beyond those of almost any other country—our cathedrals. I need name but one,—the most striking and the most obvious instance,—the cradle of English Christianity, the seat of the English Primacy,...my own proud cathedral, the Metropolitical Church of Canterbury.

But, beyond any mere antiquarian interest, there

must also be many occasions in the work of every English clergyman, when the History of the Church may yield lessons of a practical and substantial value in his manifold duties and labours. What those lessons are I shall trust, in some measure, to represent in my next Lecture. Meanwhile, let me express the hope and the stimulus which ought to be given by the thought that I shall have to address myself not merely to students, but to those who will have to turn their study into practice; not merely to the confined atmosphere of a lecture-room, but to a spirit blowing in upon us, and out from us, to the four winds of heaven. There has been doubtless a tendency in past times, (perhaps there will be in all times,) which recent measures have wisely endeavoured to counteract—a tendency to absorb the general functions of the University into the special departments of ecclesiastical thought and education. But we must not forget that there is also an academical narrowness, and dryness, and stiffness; and that there is, on the other hand, an ecclesiastical breadth, and freedom, and warmth, which is for that evil, if not the highest, at least to many of us the nearest, remedy. To think that any words here spoken, any books here studied, may enliven discourses and ministrations far away in the dark corners of London alleys, in the free air of heaths and downs in north or south, on western mountains or in eastern fens; that records of noble deeds achieved, and of wise sayings uttered

long ago, may lend a point to practical precepts, or soften needless differences, or raise dull souls heavenward, or give a firmer grasp on truth;—this will of itself cheer many an hour of labour here. In that labour and with that hope it is for all of us to join. By constant communication of mutual knowledge, by contribution of the results of the several researches and gifts of all, students and learners will really be to their Professor not only (according to the well-known and now almost worn-out saying of Niebuhr) his wings, but also his feet, and his hands, and his eyes. By bearing in mind the large practical field in which our work may be afterwards used, we shall all bring to the very driest bones of our study sinews, and flesh, and blood, and breath, and spirit, and life.

THE ADVANTAGES

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

LECTURE III.

THE ADVANTAGES

OF

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

In my first Lecture, when defining the province of Ecclesiastical History, I was led to describe it in its widest extent; in my second, when stating the method by which life could be given to the study, I was led to dwell upon its narrower limits. And we must endeavour, in our future course, never, whilst studying the parts, to forget the whole; nor ever so to lose ourselves in the whole, as to neglect the study of one or more of the parts. Breadth without accuracy, accuracy without breadth, are almost equal evils. How, and in what precise proportions, this general outline, and this representation of particular persons and events, are to be combined, time only can teach us. A month's experience will, in this respect, be better than a year's preparation. After we have broken ground, as I trust we may in the ensuing term, on the necessary approaches both to the ancient and the modern, the Jewish and the Christian period of Ecclesiastical History, we

shall be in a better condition to draw out a plan for the whole campaign.

Meanwhile, there are some general considerations of the chief practical advantages of the study, with which I may for the present leave it in your hands.

I. Importance of facts in theological study.

Whatever may be the uncertainties of History, whatever its antiquarian prejudices, whatever its imaginative temptations, there is at least one sobering and enlarging effect always to be expected from it—that it brings us down from speculations and fancies to what at least profess to be facts, and that those facts transport us some little distance from the interests and the illusions of the present. This is especially true of History in connexion with Theology. As it is one of the main characteristics of Christianity itself, that alone of all religions it claims to be founded on historical fact—that its doctrines and precepts, in great measure, have been conveyed to us in the form of history, and that this form has given them a substance, a vitality, a variety, which could, humanly speaking, have been attained in no other way; so we need not fear to confess that the same connexion has existed through all the subsequent stages of the propagation of the religion. "The disciple is not above his Master;" Theology is not above Christianity: the Christian Church is in many respects the best practical exposition of the Christian Religion. Facts are still the most powerful, the most solid, the most stubborn guides

in the mazes of speculation and casuistry; they cut through difficulties which arguments cannot overturn; they overturn theories which will surrender to nothing else. Ecclesiastical History is thus, as it were, the backbone of Theology. It keeps the mind of the theological student in an upright state: often as facts are perverted, and twisted, and bent to meet a purpose, yet they offer a sterner resistance than anything else short of the primary instincts of humanity.

They offer, too, not only the most convincing, but the least irritating, modes of persuasion,—an advantage in theological matters of no mean importance. The wrath which is kindled by an anathema, by an opinion, by an argument, is often turned away by a homely fact. It is like suddenly meeting an enemy face to face, of whom we have known only by report: he is different from what we expected; we cannot resist the pressure of his hand and the glance of his eye; he has ceased to be an abstraction, he has become a person. How many elaborate arguments respecting terms of salvation and terms of communion are shivered to pieces, yet without offence, almost without resistance, as they are "walked through" (if I may use the expression) by such heathens as Socrates, such Nonconformists as Howard, such Quakers as Elizabeth Fry.

This applies more and more strongly as our range of facts is enlarged. The more numerous

and the more varied are the objects which we embrace within our range of vision, the less likely are we to place our trust in what Bacon well calls "the idols of the cave," in which our own individual lot is cast; the more likely we are to trust in Him who is the Lord of the whole earth, and of the fulness thereof.

It will be vain to argue, on abstract grounds, for the absolute and indefeasible necessity of some practice or ceremony, of which we have learned from history that there is no instance for one, two, three, or four hundred years, in the most honoured ages of the Church. It will be vain to denounce as subversive of Christianity, doctrines which we have known from biography to have been held by the very saints, martyrs, and reformers whom else we are constantly applauding. Opinions and views which, in a familiar and modified form, waken in us no shock of surprise, or even command our warm admiration, will often for the first time be truly apprehended when we see them in the ritual or the creed of some rival, or remote, or barbarous Church, which is but the caricature and exaggeration of that which we ourselves hold. Practices which we insist on retaining or repudiating, as if they involved the very essence of the Catholic faith or of the Reformation, will appear less precious or less dangerous, as the case may be, in the eyes of the respective disputants, if history shews us clearly that we thereby make ourselves, on the one hand, more

papal than the Pope, more Roman than Rome,—on the other hand, more Lutheran than Luther, more Genevan than Calvin.

II. Importance of a general view of Ecclesiastical History.

If this be the effect of the study of even isolated facts of Christian history, much more will it result from the study of the general phenomena which mark its course. There may be a tendency in special subjects of ecclesiastical study to cramp and narrow the mind, but there is none such in the more general view, which embraces its relations to the world at large, and which compels us to view the lay as well as the clerical element of the Church, the broad secular framework in which the whole Church itself is set.

It is always useful to see, as must be seen in any extensive survey, how large a portion of our ecclesiastical diversities is to be traced, not to religious causes, but to the more innocent, and in one sense irresistible, influences of nation, of climate, of race, of the general course of human affairs. The bitterness of English partizanship will be greatly diminished in proportion as we recognise the fact, that the divergence between the Church of England and Nonconformists springs from differences not so much of theological principle or opinion, as of social and hereditary position. The greater divisions of Christendom can be regarded 'calmly and kindly,' in proportion as we are able to take in, as from a summit, the whole view of which they form the intersecting lines. What seemed, near at hand, to

be mere deformities, from a more distant point are lost in the sense of the vast prospect to which each feature contributes its peculiar part. The most cursory view of the various sects and churches of the world will make us suspect that we are not all truth and goodness, nor they all error and vice. The very names of the chiefest among them, Greek and Latin, Gallican, Anglican, German, will shew us how much of the distinction between them must be traced simply to national and geographical influences.

Nor let it be supposed that a philosophical or a general view of Ecclesiastical History is of necessity a cold or contemptuous view. There is, it is true, a melancholy feeling suggested by any wide contemplation of Christendom. We think of the contrast between the story as it might have been and the story as it is. We ask what ought to have been "more noble or more beautiful than the gradual progress of the Spirit of light and love, dispelling the darkness of folly, and subduing into one divine harmony all the jarring elements of evil;" and we have in its place, (if I may use words the more touching from the keenness of regret with which they were uttered,) "no steady, unwavering advance of heavenly spirits, but one continually interrupted, checked, diverted from its course, driven backward; as of men possessed by some bewildering spell, wasting their strength upon imaginary obstacles—hindering each other's progress and their own, by stopping to analyze and dispute

about the nature of the sun's light till all were blinded by it, instead of thankfully using its aid to shew them the right path onward[a]."

Most true,—yet even in its very sadness containing grounds of hope and consolation.

For, first, though the course of Ecclesiastical History be thus dark, there is always a bright side to be found in Ecclesiastical Biography.

III. Use of the biography of good men.

Study the lives, study the thoughts, and hymns, and prayers, study the death-beds, of good men. They are the salt not only of the world, but of the Church. They are the fruit of the Gospel, when it has failed everywhere else. In them we see close at hand, what on the public stage of history we see through every kind of distorted medium, and deceptive refraction. In them we can trace the history, if not of "the Catholic Church," at least of "the Communion of Saints." The *Acta Sanctorum* were literally, as a great French historian has observed, the only light, moral or intellectual, of what are properly called the dark ages[b]: taken in their best and widest sense, they are the true lights —"the good deeds shining in the naughty world"— of all ages. "Their glories," it has been well said, "shine far beyond the limits of their daily walk in life; their odours are wafted across the boundaries of unfriendly societies; their spiritual seed is borne away, and takes root and bears manyfold in fields

[a] Arnold's Miscellaneous Works, p. 286.

[b] Guizot's Lectures on the Civilization of France; c. xvii.

far distant from the gardens of the Lord where they were planted [c]." We have to be on our guard against the proverbial exaggerations of biographers; we have to disentangle fable and legend from truth and fact. But the profit is worth the risk; the work will be its own reward. It is well known that, amidst the trials which beset Henry Martyn the missionary, on his voyage to India, the study in which he found his chief pleasure and profit was in the kindly notices of ancient saints which form the redeeming points of Milner's "History of the Church." "I love," (so he writes in his diary,) "to converse, as it were, with those holy bishops and martyrs, with whom I hope, through grace, to spend a happy eternity. . . . The example of the Christian saints in the early ages has been a source of sweet reflection to me. . . . The holy love and devout meditations of Augustine and Ambrose I delight to think of. . . . No uninspired sentence ever affected me so much as that of the historian, that to believe, to suffer, and to love, was the primitive taste [d]." What he so felt and expressed may be, and has been, felt by many others, Such biographies are the common, perhaps the only common, literature alike of rich and poor. Hearts, to whom even the Bible speaks in vain, have by such works been roused to a sense of duty and holiness. However cold the response of mankind has been to other portions of

[c] Wilson's Bampton Lectures, p. 275.

[d] Memoir of Henry Martyn, pp. 127, 130, 136.

ecclesiastical story, this has always commanded a reverential, even an excessive attention.

Let us also remember, that what there is of instruction here, is exactly of the kind which we ought to expect. Christianity affects the springs of action, rather than the actions themselves; from its very beginning it has been seen in the lowly rather than the lofty places of the world; in the manger of Bethlehem, in the peasants of Galilee, in the caves and dens of the earth: we may therefore fairly look for its chief influences out of the beaten track of history; when we cannot trace it on the great highway of the world, we may fairly conclude that its effects will be found in the corners and pathways of life:—

> "Sprinkled along the waste of years,
> Full many a soft green isle appears:
> Pause where we may along the desert road,
> Some shelter is in sight, some sacred, safe abode."

IV. Use of the general authority of the Church.

On the other hand, if we turn from the case of individual Christians to the case of the great masses of individuals which form the main bulk of the Church,—they, too, have a lesson to teach, less palpable, but by no means to be despised, though it has been sometimes pushed to exaggeration.

We know the old saying of Vincentius, "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus," "Believe what has been believed always, everywhere, and by everybody." It is needless to repeat the arguments by which it can be shewn that, in a literal sense,

this axiom is always either untrue or inapplicable. The whole Church at Ariminum was amazed to find itself Arian; Athanasius stood against the world, and the world against Athanasius. The solitary protest is always to be honoured — the lonely martyr is avenged at last. Churches and nations, and whole generations, often seem to lose their reason. Baronius himself confesses that in the Church of the tenth century there was no pilot to guide the helm, no captain to command the crew, at the moment of its greatest need.

But still the maxim of Vincentius contains a certain element of truth, which the facts of history entirely confirm. There is a common sense in the Church, as there is a common sense in the world, which cannot be neglected with impunity; and there is an eccentricity in individuals and in sects which always tends to lead us, if not into dangerous, at least into crooked paths. The very error, which is held by great, ancient, and national communities, often loses its mischief, and entirely changes its meaning, when it becomes part of the general established belief. The very truth, which is held by a narrow sect, often becomes error from the mere fact of the isolation and want of proportion in which it is held. The strange folly of Christians persecuting Christians was first introduced, not by the orthodox, but by the heretics, of the fifth century. The fancies of Millenarians, however innocent and natural, and however widely

diffused among small circles, have always been resisted by the robust sense of the universal Church. It is not, as a general rule, the larger, but the lesser, congregations of Christendom, that have imposed the most minute and petty restrictions on opinion and practice. Whilst the Imperial, venerable, orthodox Church of the whole East is content to repose on the short Creed of the Nicene Fathers, the little Church and State of Brunswick, under the auspices of Duke Julius, requires, or did require till recently, from its ministers a stringent subscription, not only to the three Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology for the Confession, and the Smalcaldic Articles, but to all that is contained in all the works of Luther, in all the works of Melancthon, in all the works of Chemnitz.

In fact, the higher and wider is the sweep of vision, the more difficult is it to stumble at trifles, and make mountains out of mole-hills. Power, no doubt, is often frightfully abused, whether in the hands of ecclesiastics or of laymen; but to both, if there be any nobleness of character on which to work, it brings far more moderation and largeness of heart than is attainable by even better men in inferior stations. It was the charity and the wisdom of the Popes which protected the Jews in the middle ages against the fanatical attacks of individual zealots. The royal heart of the young King Edward was softer than the mercies even of a gentle prelate. Oliver Cromwell, when he came to

wield the power of Church and State, of universities and of armies alike, was tolerant to a degree which his humbler followers were incapable of imitating or understanding.

It is difficult to express the deference due to these considerations, without placing them below or above their just estimate. But they form too obvious, too important,—I may add, too consoling an inference from the course of ecclesiastical events, to be omitted altogether. Let us receive the fact both as an encouragement and as a caution. Whatever other charges may be brought against the history of Christendom, and however much it may have embraced within or alongside of itself sallies of wild sectarianism, yet it cannot fairly be called the history of Fanaticism, or even of Enthusiasm. Grey hairs, and high station, and long experience, whether of individuals or of communities, have their own peculiar claims to respect. The movement of the Church to perfection has in it an element of solidity, of permanence, and of prudence, as well as of fluctuation, and progress, and zeal.

V. Better understanding of differences and of unity.

But yet, further, even when we consider more deeply the darker points in our general view, a sense of unity emerges from the midst of disunion, a sense of success from the midst of failure. Errors and truths which we are apt to ascribe to special sects, churches, individuals, will often be seen to belong really to characters and principles which

underlie and countersect the artificial distinctions on the surface of controversy. The ingenious essays in which Archbishop Whately traces "the errors of Romanism" to the general fallacies latent in every creed and every church, might be extended to all kinds of theological division. The celebrated treatise of Bossuet on "the Variations of Protestantism" might be overlaid by an instructive work on a larger basis, in a more generous spirit, and with a nobler object,—"the Variations of the Catholic Church," shewing how wide a range of diversities even the most ancient and exclusive communities have embraced; how many opposing principles, practices, and feelings, like the creeks or valleys of some narrow territory, overlap, traverse, enfold, and run parallel with each other into the very heart of the intervening country, where we should least expect to find them. Reformers, before the Reformation; Popes, in chairs not of St. Peter; "new presbyter but old priest writ large;" "old foes with new faces;" heresy under the garb of orthodoxy, orthodoxy under the garb of heresy; they who hold, according to the ancient saying, *τὰ αἱρετικὰ καθολικῶς*, and they also who hold *τὰ καθολικὰ αἱρετικῶς*,—strange companions will be thus brought together from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Pelagius lurks under the mitre of Chrysostom or the cowl of Jerome; Loyola will find himself by the side of Wesley; John Knox will recognise a fellow-

worker in Hildebrand; the austerities of Benedict, the intolerance of Dominic, will find their counterpart at Geneva and in Massachusetts; the missionary zeal of the Arian Ulfilas, of the Jesuit Xavier, and of the Protestant Schwarz will be seen to flow from the same source.—The judgment of history will thus far be able to anticipate the judgment of Heaven, and to supersede with no doubtful hand the superficial concords and the superficial discords which belong to things temporal, by the true separation and the true union which belong to things eternal.

VI. Evidence rendered to the truth of Christianity.

But it is not only as a matter of wisdom and charity, but as a ground of Christian evidence, that a large view of ecclesiastical differences is specially useful. In the diversity of the Church will be found a more powerful argument for the divine origin of Christianity itself, than in the most perfect unity. It is not, humanly speaking, surprising that a religion should sustain itself from age to age in the same race and country. We argue truly that such a restriction was needed as a support, not for the strength, but for the infirmities of Judaism; we argue truly against the universal truth of Mahometanism, that it has never been able permanently to establish itself in any but an Eastern climate. But the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian Church has been, that it has assumed different forms, and yet not perished in the process; that the gulf, however wide, which separates Greek

from Latin, and both from Protestant, has yet not been wide enough to swallow up the common Christianity which has been transmitted from one to the other. And, in like manner, to recognise the influence of races, institutions, and political convulsions on the history of the Church, is assuredly not to diminish, but to exalt, its importance to men and to nations; not to underrate its mission, but to represent it in its full grandeur. Nothing less than one of the moving springs of the world could be so interwoven with the progress of great events, or in its different manifestations fall in so readily with the broad lines of demarcation which Nature herself has drawn between the various branches of the human family.

VII. Lessons from the failings of the Church.

And, yet further, the very imperfections and failings of the Church may tend to give us both a more sober and a more hopeful view of its ultimate prospects. The alarms, the dangers, the persecutions, the corruptions through which it has safely passed, are so many guarantees that it is itself indestructible. The fact that these obstructions to Christian truth and goodness are found not in one church only, but in all, instead of causing restlessness and impatience, ought to dispose us to make the best of our lot, whatever it be. We learn that every church partakes of the faults, as well as of the excellencies, of its own age and country,—that each is fallible as human nature itself,—that each is useful as a means, none perfect

as an end. To find Christ *or* Antichrist exclusively in any one community is against charity and against humility, but above all, against the plain facts of history. Let us hold this firmly, and we shall have then secured ourselves against two of the worst evils which infest the well-being of religious communities—the love of controversy and the love of proselytizing.

VIII. Advantages of a comparison of Ecclesiastical History with the Scriptures.

Every such reflection forces us back on a consideration which is both a chief safeguard and a chief advantage of Ecclesiastical History—the comparison which it suggests between what the Church is, and what in the Scriptures it was intended to be; between what it has been, and what from the same source we trust that it may be.

It is hard to say whether, by such a comparison, the study of the Bible or the study of Ecclesiastical History is most the gainer.

What is the history of the Church but a long commentary on the sacred records of its first beginnings? It is a fulfilment of Prophecy in the truest and widest sense of that word; a fulfilment, not merely of predictions of future events, but of that higher and deeper spirit of Prophecy which "makes manifest the secrets of the heart." The thoughts and deeds of good Christians are still, as in the Apostolic times, a living Bible; "an Epistle," a Gospel, "written on the hearts of men, known and read of all men." The various fortunes of the Church are the best explanation, as they are the

best illustration, of the parables which unfold the course of the kingdom of heaven. The failures of the Church are but the reflex of the mournful, almost pensive shade, cast before on the first anticipations of its history—(how unlike the triumphant exultations of so many human founders of human sects),—" not peace, but a sword ;" " a fire kindled on the earth ;" " a savour of death unto death."

The actual effects, the manifold applications, in history, of the words of Scripture, give them a new instruction, and afford a new proof of their endless vigour and vitality. Look through any famous passage of the Old, or yet more of the New Testament—There is hardly one that has not borne fruit in the conversion of some great saint, or in the turn it has given to some great event. At a single precept of the Gospels, Antony went his way and sold all that he had ; at a single warning of the Epistles, Augustine's hard heart was melted beneath the fig-tree at Milan ; a single chapter of Isaiah made a penitent believer of the profligate Rochester. A word to St. Peter has become the stronghold of the Papacy ; a word from St. Paul has become the stronghold of Luther. The whole Christian Church is paved with Scripture texts, rightly or wrongly applied, deeply worn by the footsteps of thousands of worshippers. The Psalter alone, by its manifold applications and uses in after times, is a vast palimpsest, written over and over again, illuminated, illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and of nations ;

battles, wanderings, dangers, escapes, death-beds, obsequies, of every age and country, rise, or may rise to our view, as we read it.

Nor is it only in special passages that the history of the Church sets before us the greatness of its origin. It is on looking back upon a mountain range which we have left, that we often for the first time understand its true character. The peaks which in a nearer view were all confused, now stand out distinct; the line of heights is drawn out in its full length; the openings and passes disentangle themselves from the surrounding valleys; the nearer and lesser objects now sink to their proper level, as they are seen backed and overtopped by the lofty range behind and above them. Even so do we, at the distance of eighteen hundred years, see in many respects the truths of Scripture with a clearer vision than they who lived even amidst their recesses or at their very foot. We who have traversed the long levels of Ecclesiastical History can see what they of old time could not see, the elevation of those divine words and acts, as compared with any that followed. We can see, as they could not see, the wide circumference of objects which those words and acts overlooked, embraced, comprehended. We can distinguish, as they could not distinguish, the relative importance, the due proportions, the general outline, of the various heights, and can sketch our picture and direct our steps accordingly.

The very extent of our departure from the original

truth; the very violence which in successive ages has been put upon the sacred words; the attempts to warp them by false interpretation or by false teaching, or to overlay them by theories or forgeries of a later date, only bring before us in a more lively and instructive form what was the point from which we started, what is the difference of the point to which we have now arrived. In that coarse but instructive fable in which Dean Swift has described the development of Ecclesiastical History, when the father's will is at last brought out by the three brothers of the tale, nothing could more clearly impress upon them the sense of its true meaning than the recollection of the artifices by which they had been induced to discover in it the sanction of their own deviations from it. "If not *totidem sententiis*, then *totidem verbis;* if not *totidem verbis*, then *totidem literis.*" So, with hardly an exaggeration, has Scripture been often handled. The next best clue to reading an oracle straightforwardly and honestly, is to be aware that we have been reading it backwards. The allegories of the early Fathers may be beautiful for their own special purpose, but they hardly profess to be expositions of the meaning of the sacred authors. The variations of reading, which copyists of later times have introduced into the text of the New Testament, are positive proofs that they found the actual words insufficient to express the altered views of their own age. The attention paid to passages manifestly of secondary importance, and the

neglect of passages manifestly of the very highest importance, may serve as guages both of what we have hitherto lost and of what we may still hope to gain, in the application of the Holy Scriptures to the wants of Ecclesiastical History.

IX. Future prospects of Ecclesiastical History.

This peculiar relation of the Bible to the history of the Church invites one concluding train of thought. When, sixteen years ago, a revered teacher stood in this place, and, after a survey of the field of Modern History, asked whether there were in the existing resources of the nations of mankind any materials for a new epoch, distinct from those which have gone before, you may remember how he answered that there were none. What if the same question be asked with regard to the prospects of Ecclesiastical History? We have seen that four great phases have passed over the fortunes of the Church—Is there likely to be another? We are told that the resources of nation and race are exhausted for the outer world in which our history moves—Are there any stores of spiritual strength yet unexplored in the forces of the Christian Church? With all reverence and with all caution, may not the reflections which we have just made encourage us to hope that such a mine does exist—a virgin mine, in the original records of Christianity? We need not speculate on the probable destinies of any Christian system or community now existing in the world; we need not determine whether, as our own Protestant historian has declared, the Papacy

may still be standing ages hence[e], after England shall have passed away; or whether, with distinguished foreigners amongst ourselves, we are to believe that it is steadily advancing year by year to the grave already dug to receive it. Still less need we compose volumes of future Ecclesiastical History out of fancied interpretations of the Apocalypse, in defiance alike of all human experience, all divine warnings. But a serious comparison of the actual contents of the Scriptures with the actual course of ecclesiastical events almost inevitably brings us to the conclusion that the existing materials, principles, and doctrines of the Christian Religion are far greater than have ever yet been employed; that the Christian Church, if it ever be permitted or enabled to use them, has a long lease of new life, and new hope before it, such as has never yet been enjoyed. When we look at the Bible on the one hand and History on the other; when we see what are the points on which the Scriptures lay most emphatic stress; when we think how much of the best blood and life of Christendom has run to leaf, and not to fruit; when we remember how constant is the protest of Scripture, and, we may add, of the best spirits of Christendom also, against preferring any cause of opinion or ceremony to justice, holiness, truth and love; how constantly and steadily all these same intimations point to One Divine Object, and One only, as the life and

[e] Macaulay's Essays, vol. iii. p. 209.

essence of Christianity,—can we hesitate to say, that, if the Christian Church be drawing to its end, or if it continue to its end with no other objects than those which it has hitherto sought, it will end with its acknowledged resources confessedly undeveloped, its finest hopes of usefulness almost untried and unattempted. It will have been like an ungenial spring cut short in full view of the summer, a stately vessel wrecked within the very sight of the shore.

Indications in History.

It may be that the age for creating new forms of the Christian faith is past and gone—that no new ecclesiastical boundaries will henceforth be laid down amongst men. It is certain that in the use of the old forms is our best chance for the present. Use them to the utmost — use them threadbare, if you will: long experience, the course of their history, their age and dignity, have made them far more elastic, far more available, than any that we can invent for ourselves. But do not give up the study of the history of the Church, either in disgust at what has been, or in despair at what may be. The history of the Christian Church, no less than of the Jewish, bears witness to its own incompleteness. The words which describe its thoughts constantly betray their deflection from the original ideas which they were meant to express,—"Church," "Gospel," "Catholic," "Evangelical,"—the very word "Ecclesiastical," as I noticed in first speaking of it, are now too often the mere shadows,

sometimes even the exact opposites, of their ancient, orthodox, scriptural meaning. We need only trace the steps of their gradual descent to their present signification, in order to see how far they, and we with them, have to ascend again before we can reach the point from which they started, the point to which we have still to attain. Read, too, the expressions of the best and wisest Christians in their best and wisest moments. Take them, not in the passion of youth, not in the heat of controversy, not in the idleness of speculation, but in the presence of some great calamity, or in the calmness of age, or in the approach of death. Take that admirable summary of mature Christian experience, which ought to be in the hands of every student of Ecclesiastical History,—one might well add, of every student of theology, of every English minister of religion,—which is contained in Baxter's review of his own narrative of his life and times[f]. See how he there corrects the narrowness, the sectarianism, the dogmatism of his youth, by the comprehensive wisdom acquired in long years of persecution, of labour, and devotion. Let us hope that what he has expressed as the result of his individual experience, we may find and appropriate in the collective experience of the old age of the Church.

[f] The whole passage may be conveniently read in Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, vol. v. p. 559—597.

Indications in Scripture.

Then turn and observe how with this best witness of Christendom, the best witness of Christianity, as set forth in the Scriptures, entirely agrees. Take any of the chapters of the Old or New Testament, to which Prophets and Apostles appeal as containing, in their judgment, the sum and substance of their message—take, above all, the summary of all Evangelical and Apostolical truth in the Four Gospels. Read them parallel with the so-called religious wars and controversies of former ages. Read them parallel with the so-called enlightenment and the so-called religious sects and parties and journals of our own age. Read, and fear, and hope, and profit by the extent of the contrast.

Doubtless there is much in the study of the Scriptures that is uncertain and difficult. But this is nothing in comparison with the light they have still to give, both in checking our judgment of the past, in guiding our judgment of the present and future. We may in former times have gone too much by their letter and too little by their spirit; but it has been far oftener our fault that we have gone neither by letter nor by spirit; it has far oftener happened that, however much the spirit may be above the letter, yet the letter is far beyond the spirit in which we have often been accustomed to deal with it. Each age of the Church has, as it were, turned over a new leaf in the Bible, and found a response to its own wants. We have a leaf still to turn, a leaf not the less new

because it is so old, not the less pregnant with consequences because it is so simple.

Conclusion.

Of all the advantages which Ecclesiastical History can yield, this stimulus to a study of the Scriptures is the most important. That study, except to a limited extent, does not fall within our sphere; the province of History, as such, will be sufficient to employ us; and it will indeed be an ample reward, if I can be enabled, in any way, to give a new charm or a firmer basis to this great subject. But it would be a reward and an object far higher, if I could, in however slight a measure, make it point to the grandeur and the truth of that which is beyond itself—if the study of the history of the Church should, by way of contrast, or illustration, or comparison, rouse any one to a deeper faith in the power and the design of the Bible, a stronger belief in what it has already done, a higher hope and clearer understanding of what its words may yet effect for us, in the chapters of living history in which we or the coming generations may bear a part.

I ventured to commence these Lectures with the description of the treasures which were shewn to the Pilgrim in the palace by the highway-side: may I close them with the prospect which he beheld from thence on the far distant horizon—described in words too sacred, in part, perhaps, for us to use, but not too sacred for the truth and the hope which I have humbly, but in all seriousness,

endeavoured to set before you as the conclusion of the whole matter.—

"Then I saw in my dream, that on the morrow "he got up to go forwards, but they desired him "to stay till the next day also; and then, said "they, we will,...if the day be clear,...shew you "the Delectable Mountains; which, said they, "would further add to his comfort,...because they "were nearer to the desired haven than where at "present he was....So he consented and staid. "When the morning was up, they had him to the "top of the house, and bid him look south. So he "did, and behold,...at a great distance,...he saw a "most pleasant mountainous country—beautified "with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers "also, with springs and fountains, very delectable "to behold. Then he asked the name of the "country. They said it was...'Immanuel's Land;' "...and it is as common, said they, as this hill is to "and for all the pilgrims. And when thou comest "there,...from thence thou mayest see to the gate "of the Celestial City,...as the shepherds that live "there will make appear."

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