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No. 83.

ADVENT SERMONS ON ANTICHRIST.

Feast of St. Peter, 1838.

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No. 84.

WHETHER A CLERGYMAN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
BE NOW BOUND TO HAVE MORNING AND EVENING
PRAYERS DAILY IN HIS PARISH CHURCH ?

Feast of St. Bartholomew, 1838.

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TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

ADVENT SERMONS ON ANTICHRIST.

SERMON I.

THE TIMES OF ANTICHRIST.

2 THESS. ii. 3.

“Let no man deceive you by any means : for that Day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

THE THESSALONIAN Christians had supposed that the coming of CHRIST was near at hand. St. Paul writes to warn them against such an expectation. Not that he discountenances their looking out for CHRIST's coming,—the contrary ; but he tells them that a certain event must come before it, and till that was arrived, the end would not be. “That Day shall not come,” he says, “except there come a falling away first.”

As long as the world lasts, this passage of Scripture will be full of reverent interest to Christians. It is their duty ever to be watching for the advent of their LORD, to search for the signs of it in all that happens around them ; and above all to keep in mind this great and awful sign which the text speaks of. At this season of the year, then, when we turn our thoughts to the coming of CHRIST, it is not out of place to review the intimations given us in Scripture concerning His precursor : this I shall now do in several Sermons ; and, in doing so, I shall follow the exclusive guidance of the ancient Fathers of the Church.

I follow the ancient Fathers, not as thinking that on such a subject they have the weight they possess in the instance of doctrines or ordinances. When they speak of doctrines, they speak of

them as being universally held. They are witnesses to the fact of those doctrines being received, not here or there, but every where. We receive those doctrines which they thus hold, not merely because they hold them, but because they bear witness that all Christians every where then held them. We take them as honest informants, but not as a sufficient authority in themselves, though they are an authority too. If they were to state these very same doctrines, but say, "These are our opinions: we deduced them from Scripture, and they are true," we might well doubt about receiving them at their hands. We might fairly say, that we had as much right to deduce from Scripture as they had; that deductions of Scripture were mere opinions; that if our deductions agreed with theirs, that would be a happy coincidence, and increase our confidence in them; but if they did not, it could not be helped—we must follow our own light. Doubtless no man has any right to impose his own deductions upon another, in matters of faith. There is an obvious obligation, indeed, upon the ignorant to submit to those who are better informed; and there is a fitness in the young submitting implicitly for a time to the teaching of their elders; but beyond this, one man's opinion is not better than another's. But this is not the state of the case as regards the primitive Fathers. They do not speak of their *own private* opinion; they do not say, "This is true, *because* we see it in Scripture"—about which there might be differences of judgments—but, "this is true, because in matter of fact it is held, and has ever been held, by all the Churches, down to our times, without interruption, ever since the Apostles:" where the question is merely one of testimony, whether they had the means of knowing that it had been and was so held; for if it was the belief of so many and independent Churches at once, and that as if from the Apostles, doubtless it cannot but be true and Apostolic.

This, I say, is the mode in which the Fathers speak as regards *doctrine*; but it is otherwise when they interpret prophecy. In this matter there seems to have been no Catholic, no universal, no openly declared traditions; and when they interpret, they are for the most part giving, and profess to be giving, either their own

private opinions, or uncertain traditions. This is what might have been expected ; for it is not ordinarily the course of Divine Providence to interpret prophecy before the event. What the Apostles disclosed concerning the future, was for the most part disclosed by them in private, to individuals—not committed to writing, not intended for the edifying of the body of CHRIST,—and was soon lost. Thus, in a few verses after the text, St. Paul says, “Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” and he writes by hints and allusions, not speaking out. And it shows how little care was taken to discriminate and authenticate his prophetic intimations, that the Thessalonians had taken up an opinion, that he had said—what he had not said—that the Day of CHRIST was immediately at hand.

Yet, though the Fathers do not convey to us the interpretation of prophecy with the same certainty as they convey doctrine, yet in proportion to their agreement, their personal character, and the general reception at the time, or the authority of the sources of the opinions they are stating, they are to be read with deference ; for, to say the least, they are as likely to be right as commentators now ; in some respects more so, because the interpretation of prophecy has become in these times a matter of controversy and party. And passion and prejudice have so interfered with soundness of judgment, that it is difficult to say who is to be trusted in it, or whether a private Christian may not be as good an expositor as those by whom the office has been assumed.

1. Now to turn to the passage in question, which I shall examine by arguments drawn from Scripture, without being solicitous to agree, or to say why I disagree, from modern commentators : “That Day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.” Here it is said that a certain frightful apostasy, and the appearing of the Man of sin, the son of perdition, i. e. as is commonly called, Antichrist, shall precede the coming of CHRIST. Our SAVIOUR seems to add, that it will immediately precede Him, or that His coming will follow close upon it ; for, after speaking of “false prophets” and “false Christs,” “showing signs and wonders,” “iniquity abounding,” and “love waxing cold,”

and the like, He adds, "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Again He says, "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation. . . .stand in the holy place. . . .then let them that be in Judea flee into the mountains ¹." Indeed, St. Paul implies this also, when he says that Antichrist shall be destroyed by the brightness of CHRIST's coming.

If, then, Antichrist is to come immediately before CHRIST, and to be the sign of His coming, it is manifest that he is not come yet, but is still to be expected.

Further, it appears that the time of Antichrist's tyranny will be three years and a half, which is an additional reason for believing he is not come; for, if so, he must have come quite lately, his time being altogether so short; and this we cannot say he has.

Besides, there are two other attendants on his appearance, which have not been fulfilled. First, a time of unexampled trouble. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved ²." This has not come. Next, the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world—"And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come ³."

Now it may be objected to this conclusion, that St. Paul says, in the passage before us, that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," i. e. even in *his* day, as if Antichrist had in fact come even then. But he would seem to mean merely this, that in his day there were shadows and forebodings, earnestings, and operating elements of that which was one day to come in its fulness. Just as the types of CHRIST went before CHRIST, so the shadows of Antichrist precede him. In truth, every event in this world is a type of those that follow, history proceeding forward as a circle ever enlarging. The days of the Apostles typified the last days: there were false Christs and troubles, and

¹ Matt. xxiv. 16. 33.

² Ib. 21, 22.

³ Ib. 14.

the true CHRIST came in judgment to destroy the Jewish Church. In like manner every age presents its own picture of those future events, which alone are the real fulfilment of the prophecy which stands at the head of all of them. Hence St. John says, "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that the Antichrist shall come, *even now* are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time ¹." Antichrist was come, and was not come; it was, and it was not the last time. In the sense in which the Apostles' day was the end of the world, it was also the time of Antichrist.—However, a second objection may be made as follows: St. Paul says, "Now ye know what withholdeth, that he (Antichrist) might be revealed in his time." Here a something is mentioned as keeping back the manifestation of the enemy of truth. The Apostle proceeds: "He that now withholdeth, will, until he be taken out of the way." Now this restraining power being generally admitted to be the Roman empire, and the Roman empire (it is argued) having long been taken out of the way, therefore Antichrist has long since come. I grant that "he that withholdeth," or "letteth," means the power of Rome, for all the ancient writers so speak of it. I grant that as Rome, according to the prophet Daniel's vision succeeded Greece, so Antichrist succeeds Rome, and our SAVIOUR CHRIST succeeds Antichrist ². But it does not hence follow that Antichrist is come: for I do not grant that the Roman empire is gone. Far from it: the Roman empire remains even to this day. It had a very different fate from the other three monsters mentioned by the Prophet; as will be seen by his description of it. "Behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it *was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns* ³." These ten horns, an Angel informed him, "are ten kings that shall arise out of this kingdom" of Rome. As, then, the ten horns belonged to the beast, and were not separate from it, so are the kingdoms into which the Roman empire has been

¹ 1 John ii. 18.² Chrysostom in loco.³ Dan. vii. 7.

divided, part of that empire itself,—a continuation of that empire in the view of *prophecy*, however we decide the *historical* question. And as the horns, or kingdoms still exist, as a matter of fact, consequently we have *not* yet seen the end of the Roman empire. “That which withholdeth” still exists, though in its ten horns; till it is removed, Antichrist will not come. And out of them he will arise, as the same Prophet informs us: “I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

2. Now, in the next place, what is told us about Antichrist by the sacred writers? This first of all, as has been already noticed, that he embodies a certain spirit, which existed even in the days of the Apostles. “The mystery of iniquity doth *already* work.” “*Even now* there are many Antichrists¹.” And *what* that spirit is, St. John declares in a subsequent chapter. “Every spirit that confesseth not that JESUS CHRIST is come in the flesh, is not of GOD; and *this* is that spirit of the Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and *even now already* is it in the world².” Here we see *what* its *doctrine* is to be; but on that I shall not here enlarge. I am speaking of its working which had begun in the days of the Apostles, and has doubtless continued ever since. Doubtless this malignant principle has been at work since from time to time, though kept under by him that “withholdeth.” Nay, for what we know, at this very time there is a fierce struggle, the spirit of Antichrist attempting to rise, and the political power in those countries which are prophetically Roman, firm and vigorous in repressing it. What that spirit is, it would be beside my purpose here to attempt to ascertain, any more than to enlarge upon its doctrine; though certainly there is at this very time, as in the days of our fathers, a fierce and lawless principle every where at work,—a spirit of rebellion against GOD and man, which the powers of government in each country can barely keep under with their greatest efforts. Whether this which we witness *be* that spirit of Antichrist, which is one day

¹ 1 John ii. 18.

² Ib. iv. 3.

to be let loose¹, this ambitious spirit, the parent of all heresy, schism, sedition, revolution, and war,—whether this be so or not, certainly the present framework of society and government, as far as it is the representative of Roman power, would seem to be that which withholdeth, and Antichrist is that which will rise when this restraint fails.

3. It has been more or less implied in the foregoing remarks, that Antichrist is one man, an individual, not a power or a kingdom. Such surely is the impression left on the mind by the Scripture notices concerning him, after taking fully into account the figurative character of prophetic language; and such was the universal belief of the early Church. Consider these passages together, which describe him, and see whether we must not so conclude. First, the text and following verses: “That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who is the adversary and rival of all that is called God or worshipped; so that he sitteth as God in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. . . . Then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders.” Next, the following passages in the prophet Daniel: “Another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” Again: “In his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom; but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. . . . And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong,

¹ Vide Dodsworth's Second Advent: *Appendix*.

and do exploits. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces, and a God whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things¹." Let it be observed, that Daniel elsewhere describes other kings, and that the event has shown them to be individuals, as is generally confessed. And in like manner St. John: "There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His Name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world²."

Further, that by Antichrist is meant some one person, is made probable by the anticipations, which have already occurred in history, of its fulfilment in this way. Individuals have arisen actually answering in a great measure to the above descriptions; and this circumstance creates a probability, that the absolute and entire fulfilment which is to come will be in an individual also. The most remarkable of these shadows of the coming evil appeared before the time of the Apostles, between them and the age of Daniel, *viz.* the heathen king Antiochus, of whom we read in the books of Maccabees. This instance is the more to the purpose, because he is actually described, (as we suppose) by Daniel, in another part of his prophecy, in terms which seem also to belong to Antichrist, and as belonging, imply that Antiochus *was* what he seems to be, a type of that more fearful enemy of

¹ Dan. vii. xi.

² Rev. xiii.

the Church. This Antiochus was the savage persecutor of the Jews, in their latter times, as Antichrist will be of the Christians. A few passages from the Maccabees will show you what he was. St. Paul in the text speaks of an apostasy, and of Antichrist as following upon it; thus is the future typified in the Jewish history. "In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them, we have had much sorrow. So this device pleased them well. Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen; whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem, according to the custom of the heathen; and made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief." After this introduction the Enemy of truth appears. "After that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again, . . . and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude, and entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light and all the vessels thereof, and the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials, and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crowns, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly." After this, he set fire to Jerusalem, "and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side. . . . Then built they the city of David with a great and strong wall, and they put therein a sinful nation, wicked men, and fortified themselves therein." Next, "King Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, and every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath." After this he forced these impieties upon the Israelites. All were to be put to death who would not "profane the sabbath and festival days, and pollute the sanctuary and holy people: and set up

altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh and unclean beasts," and "leave their children uncircumcised." At length he set up an idol, or in the words of the history, "the Abomination of Desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side. . . . And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire." It is added, "Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing, wherefore they chose rather to die . . . and there was very great wrath upon Israel¹." Here we have presented to us some of the lineaments of Antichrist, who will be such, and worse than such, as Antiochus.

The history of the apostate emperor Julian, who lived between 300 and 400 years after CHRIST, furnishes another approximation to the predicted Antichrist, and an additional reason for thinking he will be one person, not a kingdom, power, or the like.

So again does the false prophet Mahomet, who propagated his imposture about 600 years after CHRIST came.

And there have been events in our childhood, and in the generation before us, which seem to give still additional probability to the notion, that Antichrist is one, not many men acting together.

What I have said upon this subject may be summed up as follows :—that the coming of CHRIST will be immediately preceded by a very awful and unparalleled outbreak of evil, called in the text an apostasy, a falling away, in the midst of which a certain terrible man of sin and child of perdition, the special and singular enemy of CHRIST, or Antichrist, will appear; that this will be when revolutions prevail, and the present framework of society breaks to pieces; that at present the Spirit which he will embody and represent, is kept under by "the powers that be," but that on their dissolution, he will rise out of the bosom of them, and knit them together again in his own evil way, under his own rule, to the exclusion of the Church.

4. It would be out of place to say more than this at present.

¹ 1 Mac. i.

I will conclude by directing your attention to one particular circumstance contained in the text, which I have already in part commented on.

It is said there will “come a falling away, and the man of sin will be revealed.” In other words the man of sin is born of an apostasy, or at least comes into power through an apostasy, or is preceded by an apostasy, or would not be except for an apostasy. So says the inspired text : now observe, how remarkably the course of providence, as seen in history, has commented on this prediction.

First, we have a comment in the instance of Antiochus previous to the prophecy, as I have already shown. The Israelites, or at least great numbers of them, discarded their own sacred religion, *and then* the enemy was allowed to come in.

Next the apostate emperor Julian, who attempted to overthrow the Church by craft, and introduce paganism back again : he was preceded, nay, he was nurtured, in the first great heresy which disturbed the peace and purity of the Church. About forty years before he came to the throne arose the pestilent Arian heresy which denied that CHRIST was GOD. It ate its way among the rulers of the Church like a canker, and what with the treachery of some, and the mistakes of others, at one time it was all but dominant throughout Christendom. The few holy and faithful men, who witnessed for the Truth, cried out, with awe and terror at the apostasy, that Antichrist was coming. They called it the “forerunner of Antichrist¹.” And true, his Shadow came. Julian was educated in the bosom of Arianism by some of its principal upholders. His tutor was the Eusebius from whom its partizans took their name ; and in due time he fell away to paganism, became a hater and persecutor of the Church, and was cut off before he had reigned out the brief period which will be the real Antichrist’s duration.

The next great heresy, and in its consequences far more lasting and far spreading, was of twofold character,—with two

¹ πρόδρομος Ἀντιχρίστου.—Νῦν δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀποστασία· ἀπίστησαν γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς ὀρθῆς πίστεως· αὕτη τοίνυν ἐστὶν ἡ ἀποστασία, καὶ μέλλει προσδοκᾶσθαι ὁ ἔχθρός. Cyril. Catech. 15. n. 9.

heads, as I may call them, Nestorianism and Eutychianism, apparently opposed to each other, yet acting towards a common end : it in one way or other denied the truth of CHRIST'S gracious incarnation, and tended to destroy the faith of Christians not less certainly, though more insidiously, than the heresy of Arius. It spread through the East and through Egypt, corrupting and poisoning those Churches which had once, alas ! been the most flourishing, the early abodes and the strongholds of revealed truth. Out of this heresy, or at least by means of it, the impostor Mahomet sprang, and formed his creed. Here is another especial Shadow of Antichrist.

As to the third and last instance, which I might mention in the generation immediately before ourselves, I will but observe that, in like manner, the Shadow of Antichrist arose out of an apostasy, an apostasy to infidel doctrines, perhaps the most flagitious and blasphemous which the world has ever seen.

These instances give us this warning. Is the enemy of CHRIST, and His Church, to arise out of a certain special falling away from GOD ? And is there no reason to fear that some such Apostasy is gradually preparing, gathering, hastening on in this very day ? For is there not at this very time a special effort made almost all over the world, that is, every here and there, more or less, in sight or out of sight, in this or that place, but most visibly or formidably in its most civilized and powerful parts, an effort to do without religion ? Is there not an opinion avowed and growing, that a nation has nothing to do with religion ; that it is merely a matter for each man's own conscience,—which is all one with saying that we may let the truth fail from the earth without trying to continue it ? Is there not a vigorous and united movement in all countries to cast down the Church of CHRIST from power and place ? Is there not a feverish and ever busy endeavour to get rid of the necessity of religion in public transactions ? for example, an attempt to get rid of oaths, under a pretence that they are too sacred for affairs of common life, instead of providing that they be taken more reverently and more suitably ? an attempt to educate without religion,—that is, by putting all forms of religion together, which comes to the same thing ? an attempt

to enforce temperance, and the virtues which flow from it, without religion, by means of societies which are built on mere principles of utility? an attempt to make *expedience*, and not *truth*, the end and the rule of measures of state and the enactments of law? an attempt to make numbers, and not truth, the ground of maintaining, or not maintaining this or that creed, as if we had any reason whatever in Scripture for thinking that the many will be in the right, and the few in the wrong? An attempt to deprive the Bible of its one meaning to the exclusion of others, to make people think that it may have an hundred meanings all equally good, or, in other words, that it has no meaning at all, is a dead letter, and may be put aside? an attempt to supersede religion altogether, as far as it is external or objective, as far as it is displayed in ordinances, or can be expressed by written words, —to confine it to our inward feelings, and thus, considering how transient, how variable, how evanescent our feelings are, an attempt, in fact, to destroy religion?

Surely, there is at this day a confederacy of evil, marshalling its hosts from all parts of the world, organizing itself, taking its measures, inclosing the Church of CHRIST as in a net, and preparing the way for a general apostasy from it. Whether this very apostasy is to give birth to Antichrist, or whether he is still to be delayed, we cannot know; but at any rate this apostasy, and all its tokens, and instruments, are of the Evil One and savour of death. Far be it from any of us to be of those simple ones, who are taken in that snare which is circling around us! Far be it from us to be seduced with the fair promises in which Satan is sure to hide his poison! Do you think he is so unskilful in his craft, as to ask you openly and plainly to join him in his warfare against the Truth? No; he offers you baits to tempt you. He promises you civil liberty; he promises you equality; he promises you trade and wealth; he promises you a remission of taxes; he promises you reform. This is the way in which he conceals from you the kind of work to which he is putting you; he tempts you to rail against your rulers and superiors; he does so himself, and induces you to imitate him; or he promises you illumination,—he offers you knowledge, science, philosophy,

enlargement of mind. He scoffs at times gone by ; he scoffs at every institution which reveres them. He prompts you what to say, and then listens to you, and praises you, and encourages you. He bids you mount aloft. He shows you how to become as gods. Then he laughs and jokes with you, and gets intimate with you ; he takes your hand, and gets his fingers between yours, and grasps them, and then you are his.

Shall we Christians, sons of God, brethren of CHRIST, heirs of glory, shall we allow ourselves to have lot or part in this matter ? Shall we, even with our little finger, help on the Mystery of iniquity which is travailing for birth, and convulsing the earth with its pangs ? “ O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united¹.” “ What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? And what concord hath CHRIST with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols ? for ye are the temple of the living God. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing²,” lest you be workers together with God’s enemies, and be opening the way for the Man of sin, the son of perdition.

¹ Gen. xlix. 6.

² 1 Cor. vi. 14—17.

SERMON II.

THE RELIGION OF ANTICHRIST.

1 JOHN iv. 3.

“Every spirit that confesseth not that JESUS CHRIST is come in the flesh, is not of GOD, and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already it is in the world.”

ST. JOHN tells us in these words what the characteristic of the Antichrist should be who is to come; *viz.* that he shall openly deny our LORD JESUS CHRIST to be the SON of GOD come in the flesh from heaven. So exactly and fully was this description to answer to him, that to deny CHRIST might be suitably called the spirit of Antichrist; and the deniers of Him might be said to have the spirit of Antichrist, to be like Antichrist, to be Antichrists. The same thing is stated in a former chapter. “Who is the Liar, but he that denieth that JESUS is the CHRIST? he is the Antichrist, that denieth the FATHER and the SON. Whosoever denieth the SON, the same hath not the FATHER¹ ;” from which words, moreover, it would appear that Antichrist will be led on from rejecting the SON of GOD, to the rejection of GOD altogether, either by implication or practically.

I shall now make some further observations on the characteristic marks of the predicted enemy of the Church; and, as in those I made last week, I shall confine myself to the interpretations of Scripture given by the early Fathers.

¹ 1 John ii. 22, 23.

My reason for doing so is simply this,—that on so difficult a subject as unfulfilled prophecy, I really can have no opinion of my own, nor indeed is it desirable I should have, or at least that I should put it forward in any formal way. The opinion of any one person, even if he were the most fit to form one, could hardly be of any authority, or be worth putting forward by itself; whereas the judgment and views of the early Church claim and attract our especial regard, because for what we know they may be in part derived from traditions of the Apostles, and because they are put forward far more consistently and unanimously than those of any other set of teachers. Thus they have *greater* claims on our attention than those of other writers, be their claims little or great; if they are little, those of others are still less. The only really strong claim which can be made on our belief, is the clear fulfilment of the prophecy. Did we see all the marks of the prophecy satisfactorily answered in the past history of the Church, then we might dispense with authority in the parties setting the proof before us. This condition however can hardly be fulfilled, because the date of Antichrist comes close upon the coming of CHRIST in judgment, and therefore cannot have happened so as to allow of being appealed to. Nor is any history producible which fulfils all the marks of Antichrist clearly, though some are fulfilled here and there. Nothing then is left us, (if we are to take up any opinion at all,—if we are to profit, as Scripture surely intends, by its warnings concerning the evil which is to come), but to go by the judgment of the Fathers, whether that be of special authority in this matter or not. To them therefore I had recourse last week, and now shall have recourse again. To continue then the subject with the early Fathers as my guides.

1. It seems clear that St. Paul and St. John speak of the same enemy of the Church, from the similarity of their descriptions. They both say, that the spirit itself was already at work in their day. “That spirit of the Antichrist,” says St. John in the text, “is *now already* in the world.” “The mystery of iniquity doth *already* work,” says St. Paul. And they both describe the enemy as characterized by the same especial sin, open infidelity.

St. John says, that “ he is the Antichrist that *denieth the FATHER and the SON :*” while St. Paul speaks of him in like manner as “ *the adversary and rival of all that is called God, or worshipped ;*” that “ he sitteth as God in the temple of God, setting forth himself that he is God.” In both these passages, the same blasphemous denial of God and religion is described ; but St. Paul adds, in addition, that he will oppose all existing religion, true or false, “ *all that is called God, or worshipped.*”

Two other passages of Scripture may be adduced, predicting the same reckless impiety ; one from the eleventh chapter of Daniel : “ The king shall do according to his will ; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself *above every god*, and shall speak marvellous things *against the God of gods*, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished Neither shall he regard the *God of his fathers*, nor *the Desire of women* (that is, as it would appear, the Messiah, to be His mother being the especial privilege and object of hope among the Jewish women), nor *regard any god*—for he shall magnify himself *above all.*”

The other passage is faintly marked with any prophetic allusion in itself, except that all our SAVIOUR'S sayings have a deep meaning, and the Fathers take this in particular to have such. “ I am come in My FATHER'S Name, and ye receive Me not ; if *another shall come in his own name*, him ye will receive¹.” This they consider to be a prophetic allusion to Antichrist, whom the Jews were to mistake for the Christ. He is to come “ in *his own name.*” Not from God, as even the SON of God came, who if any might have come in the power of His essential divinity, not in God'S Name, not with any pretence of a mission from Him, but in his own name, by a blasphemous assumption of divine power, thus will Antichrist come.

To the above passages may be added those which speak generally of the *impieties* of the last age of the world, impieties which we may believe will usher in and be completed in Antichrist :

“ Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

¹ John v. 43.

. . . Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried : but the wicked shall do wickedly ; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand¹." "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof²:" "scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming³?" "despising government, presumptuous . . . self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities . . . promising men liberty, while themselves the servants of corruption⁴:" and the like.

2. I just now made mention of the Jews : it may be well then to state what was held in the early Church concerning Antichrist's connexion with them.

Our LORD foretold that many should come in His name, saying "I am Christ." It was the judicial punishment of the Jews, as of all unbelievers in one way or another, that having rejected the true Christ, they should take up with a false one ; and Antichrist will be the complete and perfect seducer, towards whom all previous ones are approximations, according to the text just quoted, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." To the same purport are St. Paul's words after describing Antichrist ; "whose coming," he says, "is . . . with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for *this cause* God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Hence, considering that Antichrist would pretend to be the Messiah, it was of old the received notion that he was to be of Jewish race and to observe the Jewish rites.

Further, St. Paul says that Antichrist should "sit in the

¹ Dan. xii. 4. 10.

² 2 Tim. iii. 2—5.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 10. 19.

Temple of God ;” that is, according to the earlier Fathers, in the *Jewish Temple*. Our SAVIOUR’S own words may be taken to support this notion, because He speaks of “the Abomination of Desolation” (which, whatever other meanings it might have, in its fulness denotes Antichrist) “standing in the *holy place*.” Further, the persecution of CHRIST’S witnesses which Antichrist will make, is described by St. John as taking place in *Jerusalem*. “Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, (which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt,) *where also our LORD was crucified*.”

Now here a remark may be made. At first sight, I suppose, we should not consider that there was much evidence from the Sacred Text for Antichrist taking part with the Jews, or having to do with their Temple. It is, then, a very remarkable fact, that the apostate emperor Julian, who was a type and earnest of the great enemy, should, as he did, have taken part with the Jews, and set about building their temple. Here the history is a sort of comment on the prophecy, and sustains and vindicates the early interpretations of it which I am relating. Of course I must be understood to mean, and a memorable circumstance it is, that this belief of the Church that Antichrist should be connected with the Jews, was expressed long before Julian’s time, and that we still possess the works in which it is contained. We have the writings of two Fathers, both Bishops and martyrs of the Church, who lived at least one hundred and fifty years before Julian, and less than one hundred years after St. John. They both distinctly declare Antichrist’s connexion with the Jews.

The one of them speaks as follows: “In the Temple which is at Jerusalem the adversary will sit, endeavouring to show himself to be the Christ¹.”

And the other says, “Antichrist will be he who shall resuscitate the kingdom of the Jews².”

¹ . . . “cujus (Dei) jussu hoc, quod est in Hierosolymis, factum est Templum, ob eas causas quæ a nobis dictæ sunt; in quo adversarius sedebit, tentans semetipsum Christum ostendere, sicut et Dominus ait, ‘Quum autem videritis Abominationem desolationis,’” &c. Iren. Hær. v. 25.

² . . . ὅπερ δέδεικται οὐχ ἕτερον ἀλλ’ ἢ ὁ Ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἐγειρόμενος, ὅς

What makes this still more observable is, that the recent Shadow of Antichrist, whom our fathers or we ourselves saw, by a sort of fatality (so to speak) took up the cause of the Jews, and was almost hailed by them as their Messiah, and seemed to be drawn irresistibly towards and to hover about the Holy Land, which the early Church considered would be the scene of Antichrist's exploits.

§. Next let us ask, Will Antichrist profess any sort of religion at all? Neither true God nor false God will he worship: so far is clear, and yet something more, and that obscure, is told us. Indeed, as far as the prophetic accounts go, they seem at first sight incompatible with each other. Antichrist is to "exalt himself over all that is called God or worshipped." He will set himself forcibly against idols and idolatry, as the early teachers agree in declaring. Yet in the book of Daniel we read, "In his estate *shall he honour the God of forces; and a God whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange God, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory*¹." What is meant by the words translated "God of forces," and afterwards called "a strange God," is quite hidden from us, and probably will be so till the event; but any how some sort of false worship is certainly predicted as the mark of Antichrist, with this prediction the contrary way, that he shall set himself against *all idols*, as well as against the true God. Now it is not at all extraordinary that there should be this contrariety in the prediction, for we know generally that infidelity leads to superstition, and that the men most reckless in their blasphemy are cowards also. They cannot be consistent if they would. But let me notice here again a remarkable coincidence, which is contained in the history of the

καὶ αὐτὸς τὴν Ἰουδαίων βασιλείαν ἀναστήσει. Hippol. de Antichristo, § 25. St. Cyril of Jerusalem also speaks of Antichrist building the Jewish Temple; and he too wrote before Julian's attempt, and (what is remarkable) prophesied it would fail, *because Julian was not the Antichrist, who alone could do it.* Vide Ruff. Hist. x. 37.

¹ Dan. xi. 38, 39.

last fifty years,—a coincidence between actual events and prophecy sufficient to show us that the apparent contradiction in the latter may easily be reconciled, though beforehand we may not see how; sufficient to remind us that the all-watchful eye, and the all-ordaining hand of GOD is still over the world, and that the seeds sown in prophecy above two thousand years since, are not dead, but from time to time, by blade and tender shoot, give earnest to the future harvest. Surely the world is impregnated with unearthly elements, which ever and anon, in unhealthy seasons, give lowering and muttering tokens of the wrath to come!

In that great and famous nation which is near us, once great for its love of CHRIST'S Church, since memorable for deeds of blasphemy, which leads me here to mention it, and now, when it should be pitied and prayed for, made unhappily our own model in too many respects,—followed when it should be condemned, and admired when it should be excused,—in the capital of that powerful and celebrated nation, there took place, as we all well know, within the last fifty years, an open apostasy from Christianity; not from Christianity only, but from every kind of worship which might retain any semblance or pretence of the great truths of religion. Atheism was absolutely professed;—yet in spite of this, it seems a contradiction in terms to say it, a certain sort of worship, and that, as the prophet expresses it, “a strange worship,” was introduced. Observe what this was.

I say, they avowed on the one hand Atheism. They prevailed upon an unhappy man, whom their proceedings had forced upon the Church as an Archbishop, to come before them in public and declare that there was no GOD, and that what he had hitherto taught was a fable. They wrote up over the burial-places that death was an eternal sleep. They closed the Churches, they seized and desecrated the gold and silver plate belonging to them, turning these sacred instruments, like Belshazzar, to the use of their impious revellings; they formed mock processions, clad in priestly garments, and singing profane hymns. They annulled the divine ordinance of marriage, resolving it into a

mere civil contract to be made and dissolved at pleasure. These things are but a part of their enormities.

On the other hand, after having broken away from all restraint towards God and man, they gave a name to the reprobate state itself into which they had thrown themselves, and exalted it, that very negation of religion, or rather that real and living blasphemy, into a kind of God. They called it LIBERTY, and they *literally* worshipped it as a divinity. It would almost be incredible, that men who had flung off all religion should be at the pains to assume a new and senseless worship of their own devising, whether in superstition or in mockery, were not events so recent and so notorious. After abjuring our LORD and SAVIOUR, and blasphemously declaring Him to be an impostor, they proceeded to decree, in the public assembly of the nation, the adoration of Liberty and Equality as divinities: and they appointed festivals besides in honour of Reason, the Country, the Constitution, and the Virtues. Further, they determined that tutelary gods, even dead men, may be canonized, consecrated, and worshipped; and they enrolled in the number of these some of the most notorious infidels and profligates of the last century. The remains of the two principal of these were brought in solemn procession into one of their Churches, and placed upon the holy altar itself; incense was offered to them, and the assembled multitude bowed down in worship before one of them—before what remained on earth of an inveterate enemy of CHRIST.

Now, I do not mention all this as considering it the fulfilment of the prophecy, nor, again, as if the fulfilment when it comes will be in this precise way, but merely to point out, what the course of events has shown us in these latter times, that there *are* ways of fulfilling sacred announcements that seem at first sight contradictory,—that men may oppose every existing worship, true and false, and yet take up a worship of their own from pride, wantonness, policy, superstition, fanaticism, or other reasons.

And further, let it be remarked, that there was a tendency in the infatuated people I have spoken of, to introduce the old Roman democratic worship, as if further to show us that Rome,

the fourth monster of the prophet's vision, is not dead. They even went so far as to restore the worship of one of the Roman divinities (Ceres) by name, raised a statue to her, and appointed a festival in her honour. This indeed was inconsistent with exalting themselves "above *all* that is called God;" but I mention it, as I have said, not as throwing light upon the prophecy, but to show that the spirit of old Rome has not passed from the world, though its name is almost extinct.

Still further, it is startling to observe, that the former apostate, in the early times, the Emperor Julian, he too was engaged in bringing back Roman Paganism.

Further still, let it be observed that Antiochus too, the Antichrist before CHRIST, the persecutor of the Jews, he too signalized himself in forcing the Pagan worship upon them, introducing it even into the Temple.

We know not what is to come; but this we may safely say, that, improbable as it is that Paganism should ever be publicly restored and enforced by authority for any time, however short, even three years and a half, yet it is far less improbable now than it was fifty years ago, before the event occurred which I have referred to. Who would not have been thought a madman or idiot, before that period, who had conjectured such a portentous approximation to Paganism as actually took place?

4. Now let us recur to the ancient Fathers, and see whether their further anticipations do not run parallel to the events which have since happened.

Antichrist, as they considered, will come out of the Roman Empire just upon its destruction;—that is, the Roman Empire will in its last days divide itself into ten parts, and the enemy will come up suddenly out of it upon these ten, and subdue three of them, or all of them perhaps, and (as the prophet continues) "shall speak great words against the MOST HIGH, and shall wear out the saints of the MOST HIGH, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into His hand until a time, times, and the dividing of time¹." Now it is very observable, that one of the two early Fathers whom

I have already cited¹, expressly says that the ten states (the "toes" of Dan. ii.) which will at length appear, shall be *democracies*. I say this is observable, considering the *present* state of the world, the tendency of things in this day towards democracy, and the instance which has been presented to us of democracy within the last fifty years, in those occurrences in France to which I have already alluded.

Another expectation of the early Church was, that the Roman monster, after remaining torpid for centuries, would wake up at the end of the world, and be restored in all its laws and forms; and this too, considering those same recent events to which I have alluded, is certainly worth noticing also. One of the Fathers, whom I have already quoted, expressly deduces from a passage in the xiiith chapter of the Apocalypse, that "the system of Augustus, who was founder of the Roman Empire, shall be adopted and established by him (Antichrist), in order to his own aggrandizement and glory. 'This is the fourth monster whose head was wounded and healed; in that the empire was destroyed and came to nought, and was divided into ten. But at this time Antichrist, as being a man of resources, will heal and restore it; so that it will be active and vigorous once more through the system which he establishes²."

I will but notice one other expectation falling in with the foregoing notion of the re-establishment of Roman power, entertained by the Fathers whom I have cited several times; viz. one concerning the name of Antichrist, as spoken of in the xiiiith chapter of Revelation: "Here is wisdom," says the inspired

¹ . . . τούτων οὖν ἐσομένων, καὶ τῶν δέκα δακτύλων τῆς εἰκόνης εἰς δημοκρατίας χωρησάντων, καὶ τῶν δέκα κεράτων τοῦ τετάρτου θηρίου εἰς δέκα βασιλείας μερισθέντων, ἴδωμεν σαφέστερον τὰ προκειμένα. Hippol. de Antichristo, § 27.

² . . . τοῦτο σημαίνει, ὅτι κατὰ τὸν Αὐγούστου νόμον, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ ἡ βασιλεία Ῥωμαίων συνέστη, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὸς κελεύσει καὶ διατάξει ἅπαντα ἐπικυρῶν, διὰ τούτου δόξαν ἑαυτοῦ πλείονα περιποιούμενος. Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ θηρίον τὸ τέταρτον, οὗ ἐπλήγη ἡ κεφαλὴ καὶ πάλιν ἐθεραπεύθη, διὰ τὸ καταλυθῆναι αὐτήν, ἢ καὶ ἀτιμασθῆναι, καὶ εἰς δέκα διαδήματα ἀναλυθῆναι· ὅς τότε πανοῦργος ὢν ὥσπερ θεραπεύσει αὐτήν καὶ ἀνανεώσει. . . . ἐνεργήσει γὰρ καὶ ἰσχύσει πάλιν διὰ τὸν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ὀριζόμενον νόμον. Hippol. de Antichristo, § 49.

text, "let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred threescore and six." They both give a name, (the letters of which together in Greek make up this number) characteristic of the position of Antichrist as the head of the Roman Empire in its restored state, viz. the word *Latinus*, or the Latin king.

The earlier of these Fathers speaks as follows: "Expect that the empire will first be divided into ten kings; then while they are reigning and beginning to settle and aggrandize themselves, suddenly one will come and claim the kingdom, and frighten them, having for his name the very number 666; him recognize as the Abomination of Desolation. This is implied in the Apostle's saying, 'When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come on them¹.'" Then he goes on to mention, together with two other words, the name of *Latinos* as answering to the number, and says of it, "This is very probable, since it is the name of the last empire;—for the Latins (that is, the Romans) are now in power²."

The other Father thus speaks: "Since the wound of the first monster was healed and it is plain that the Latins are that empire, therefore he is called the Latin King (*Latinus*), the name passing from an empire to an individual³." Whether this anticipation will be fulfilled or not, we cannot say. I only men-

¹ "Scientes firmum numerum qui a Scriptura annunciatu est, id est, sexcentorum sexaginta sex, sustineant primum quidem divisionem regni in decem; post deinde, illis regnantibus et incipientibus corrigere sua negotia, et augere suum regnum, qui de improvise advenerit regnum sibi vindicans et terrebit prædictos, habens nomen continens prædictum numerum, hunc vere cognoscere esse Abominationem desolationis. Hoc et Apostolus ait, 'Quum dixerint,'" &c. Iren. Hær. v. 30.

² "Sed et *Λατεῖνος* nomen habet sexcentorum sexaginta sex numerum; et valde verisimile est, quoniam novissimum regnum hoc habet vocabulum. Latini enim sunt qui nunc regnant." Iren. Hær. ibid. He goes on, however, to say he prefers one of the other words.

³ "... ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ προέφημεν λέγοντες, ὅτι ἐθεραπεύθη ἡ πλήγη τοῦ θηρίου τοῦ πρώτου, καὶ ποιήσει λαλεῖν τὴν εἰκόνα, τουτέστιν, ἰσχυσε· φανερόν δ' ἐστὶ πᾶσιν, ὅτι οἱ κρατοῦντες ἔτι νῦν εἰσὶ Λατεῖνοι, εἰς ἐνὸς οὖν ἀνθρώπου ὄνομα μεταγόμενον γίνεται Λατεῖνος. Hipp. de Antichristo, § 50.

tion it as showing the belief of the **Fathers** in the restoration and re-establishment of the Roman empire, which has certainly since their day been attempted.

It seems then, on the whole, that, as far as the testimony of the early Church goes, Antichrist will be an open blasphemer, opposing himself to every existing worship, true and false,—a persecutor, a patron to the Jews, and a restorer of their worship, and, further, the author of a novel kind of worship. Moreover, he will appear suddenly, at the very end of the Roman empire, which once was and now sleeps; that he will knit it into one, and engraft his Judaism and his new worship (a sort of Paganism, it may be) upon the old discipline of Cæsar Augustus; that in consequence he will earn the title of the Latin or Roman King, as best expressive of his place and character; lastly, that he will pass away as suddenly as he came.

Now concerning this, I repeat, I do not wish to pronounce how far the early Church was right or wrong in these anticipations, though events since have variously tended to strengthen its general interpretations of Scripture prophecy.

It may be asked, What practical use is there in speaking of these things, if they be doubtful? With a short notice of this objection, I shall conclude.

First, it is not unprofitable to bear in mind that we are still under what may be called a miraculous system. I do not mean to maintain that literal miracles are taking place now, but that our present state is a portion of a providential course, which began in miracle, and at least at the end of the world, if not before, will end in miracle. The particular expectations above detailed may be right or wrong; yet an Antichrist, whoever and whatever he be, is to come; marvels are to come; the old Roman empire is not extinct; the devil, if bound, is bound but for a season; the contest of good and evil is not ended. I repeat it, in the present state of things, when the great object of education is supposed to be the getting rid of things supernatural, when we are bid to laugh and jeer at believing every thing we do not see, are told to account for every thing by things known and ascertained, and to assay every statement by the touchstone of experience, I

must think that this vision of Antichrist, as a supernatural power to come, is a great providential gain, as being a counterpoise to the evil tendencies of the age.

And next, it must surely be profitable for our thoughts to be sent backward and forward to the beginning and the end of the Gospel times, to the first and second coming of CHRIST. What we want, is to *understand* that we are in the place in which the early Christians were, with the same covenant, ministry, sacraments, and duties ;—to realize a state of things long past away ;—to feel that we are in a sinful world, a world lying in wickedness ;—to discern our position in it, that we are witnesses in it, that reproach and suffering are our portion,—so that we must not “think it strange” if they come upon us, but a kind of gracious exception if they do not ;—to have our hearts awake, as if we had seen CHRIST and His Apostles, and seen their miracles,—awake to the hope and waiting of His second coming, looking out for it, nay, desiring to see the tokens of it ;—thinking often and much of the judgment to come, dwelling on and adequately entering into the thought, that *we* individually shall be judged. All these surely are acts of true and saving faith ; and this is one substantial use of the Book of Revelation, and other prophetic parts of Scripture, quite distinct from our knowing their real interpretation, viz. to take the veil from our eyes, to lift up the covering which lies over the face of the world, and make us see day by day, as we go in and out, as we get up and lie down, as we labour, and walk, and rest, and recreate ourselves, the Throne of GOD set up in the midst of us, His majesty and His judgments, His SON’S continual intercession for the elect, their trials, and their victory.

May GOD enable us all thus to walk by faith, not by sight, and live in the past and future, not in the present !

SERMON III.

THE CITY OF ANTICHRIST.

REV. xvii. 18.

“The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

THE city spoken of in these words is evidently Rome, which was then the seat of empire all over the earth,—which was supreme even in Judæa. We hear of the Romans all through the Gospels and Acts. Our SAVIOUR was born when His mother, the Blessed Virgin, and Joseph, were brought up to Bethlehem to be taxed by the Roman governor. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. St. Paul was at various times protected by the circumstance of his being a Roman citizen; on the other hand, when he was seized and imprisoned, it was by the Roman governors, and at last he was sent to Rome itself, to the emperor, and eventually martyred there, together with St. Peter. Thus the sovereignty of Rome, at the time when CHRIST and His Apostles preached and wrote, which is a matter of historical notoriety, is forced on our notice in the New Testament itself. It is undeniably meant in the text, by the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The connexion of Rome with the reign and exploits of Antichrist, is so often brought before us in the controversies of the day, that it may be well, after what I have already had occasion to say on the subject of the last enemy of the Church, to consider now what Scripture prophecy says concerning Rome; which I shall attempt to do, as before, with the guidance of the early Fathers.

Now let us observe what the Chapter says, in which the text occurs, concerning Rome, and what we may deduce from it.

This great city is described under the image of a woman, cruel, profligate, and impious. She is described as arrayed in all worldly splendour and costliness, in purple and scarlet, in gold and precious stones, and pearls, as shedding and drinking the blood of the saints, till she was drunken with it. Moreover she is called by the name of "Babylon the Great," to signify her power, wealth, profaneness, pride, sensuality, and persecuting spirit, after the pattern of that former enemy of the Church. I need not here relate how all this really answered to the character and history of Rome at the time St. John spoke of it. There never was a more ambitious, haughty, hardhearted, and worldly people than the Romans; never any, for none else had ever the opportunity, which so persecuted the Church. Christians suffered ten persecutions at their hands, as they are commonly reckoned, and very horrible ones, extending over two hundred and fifty years. The day would fail to go through an account of the tortures they suffered from Rome; so that the Apostle's description was as signally fulfilled afterwards as a prophecy, as it was accurate at the time as an historical notice.

This guilty city, represented by St. John as an abandoned woman, is said to be seated on "a scarlet-coloured monster, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and *ten horns*." Here we are sent back by the prophetic description to the seventh chapter of Daniel, in which the four great empires of the world are shadowed out under the figure of four beasts, a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a nameless monster, "diverse" from the rest, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly;" "*and it had ten horns*." This surely is the very same beast which St. John saw: the ten horns mark it. Now this fourth beast in Daniel's vision is the Roman empire; therefore "the beast" on which the woman sat, is the Roman empire. And this agrees very accurately with the actual position of things in history; for Rome, the mistress of the world, might well be said to sit upon, and be carried about triumphantly on that world which she had subdued, and made her creature. Further, the prophet Daniel explains the ten horns

of the beast to be "ten kings that shall arise" out of this empire; in which St. John agrees, saying, "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." Moreover in a former vision Daniel speaks of the empire as destined to be "divided," as "partly strong and partly broken ¹." Further still, this empire, the beast of burden of the woman, was at length to rise against her and devour her, as some savage animal might turn upon its keeper; and it was to do this in the time of its divided or multiplied existence. "The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate" her, "and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire." Such was to be the end of the great city. Lastly, three of the kings, perhaps all, are said to be subdued by Antichrist, who is to come up suddenly while they are in power; for such is the course of Daniel's prophecy—"Another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings, and he shall speak great words against the Most HIGH, and shall wear out the saints of the Most HIGH, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hands until a time, times, and the dividing of time." This power, who was to rise upon the kings, is Antichrist; and I would have you observe how Rome and Antichrist stand towards each other in the prophecy. Rome is to fall before Antichrist rises; for the ten kings are to destroy Rome, and Antichrist is then to appear and supersede the ten kings. As far as we dare judge from the words, this seems clear. St. John says, "the ten horns shall hate and devour" the woman: and Daniel says, "I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn" with "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things:"—that is Antichrist.

Now then, let us consider how far these prophecies have been fulfilled, and what seems to remain.

In the first place, the Roman empire did break up, as foretold. It divided into a number of separate kingdoms, such as our own, France, and the like; *yet* it is difficult to number ten accurately

¹ Dan. ii. 41, 42.

and exactly. Next, though Rome certainly has been desolated in the most fearful and miserable way, *yet* it has not exactly suffered from ten parts of its own former empire, but from barbarians who came down upon it from regions external to it; and, in the third place, it still exists as a city, *whereas* it was to be "desolated, devoured, and burned with fire." And, fourthly, there is *one* point in the description of the ungodly city, which has hardly been fulfilled at all in the case of Rome. She had "a golden cup in her hand full of abominations," and made "the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication;" expressions which imply surely some seduction or delusion which she was enabled to practise upon the world, and which, I say, has not been fulfilled in the case of that great imperial city upon seven hills of which St. John spake. Let us consider some of these points more at length.

I say, the Roman empire has scarcely yet been divided into ten. The prophet Daniel is conspicuous among the inspired writers for the clearness and exactness of his predictions; so much so, that some infidels, overcome by the truth of them, could only take refuge in the unworthy, and, at the same time, most unreasonable and untenable supposition, that they were written after the events which they profess to foretel. But we have had no such exact fulfilment in history of the ten kings; therefore we must suppose that it is yet to come. With this accords the ancient notion, that they were to come *at the end of the world*, and last but *a short time*, Antichrist coming upon them. There have, indeed, been approximations to that number, yet, I conceive, nothing more. Now observe how the actual state of things corresponds to the prophecy, and to the primitive interpretation of it. It is difficult to say whether the Roman empire is gone or not: in one sense, it is,—for it is divided into kingdoms; in another sense, it is not,—for the date cannot be assigned at which it came to an end, and much might be said in various ways, to show that it might be considered still existing, though in a mutilated and decayed state. But if this be so, and if it is to end in ten vigorous kings, as Daniel says, then it must one day *revive*. Now observe, I say, how the prophetic description answers to this account of it. "The Beast," that is, the Roman

empire, "the Monster that thou sawest, *was and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss, and go into perdition.*" Again, mention is made of "the Beast that was, and *is not, and yet is.*" Again, we are expressly told that the ten kings and the empire shall rise together; the kings appearing at the time of the monster's resurrection, not in its languid and torpid state. "The ten kings have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the beast." If, then, the Roman power is still prostrate, the ten kings have not come; and if the ten kings have not come, the destined destroyers of the woman, the full judgments upon Rome have not yet come.

Thus the full measure of judgment has not fallen upon Rome; yet her sufferings, and the sufferings of her empire, have been very severe. St. Peter seems to predict them, in his First Epistle, as then impending. He seems to imply, that CHRIST'S visitation, which was then just occurring, was no local or momentary vengeance upon one people or city, but a solemn and extended judgment of the whole earth, though beginning at Jerusalem. "The time is come," he says, "when judgment must begin at *the house of God* (at the sacred city); and, if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved" (i. e. the remnant who should go forth of Zion, according to the prophecy, that chosen seed in the Jewish Church which received CHRIST when He came, and took the new name of Christians, and shot forth and grew far and wide into a fresh Church, or, in other words, the elect whom our SAVIOUR speaks of as being involved in all the troubles and judgments of the devoted people, yet safely carried through); "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear,"—the inhabitants of the world at large¹?

Here is intimation of the presence of a fearful scourge, which was then going over all the ungodly world, beginning at apostate Jerusalem, and punishing it. Such was the case: vengeance first fell upon the once holy city, which was destroyed by the Romans: it proceeded next against the executioners themselves². The empire was disorganized, and broken to pieces with dissensions and insur-

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Vide also Jer. xxv. 28, 29. Ezek. ix. 6.

² Vide Is. xlvi. 5, 6.

rections, with plagues, famines, and earthquakes, while countless hosts of barbarians attacked it from the north and east, and portioned it out, and burned and pillaged Rome itself. The judgment, I say, which began at Jerusalem, steadily tracked its way for centuries round and round the world, till at length, with unerring aim, it smote the haughty mistress of all nations herself, the guilty woman seated upon the fourth monster which Daniel saw. I will mention one or two of these fearful inflictions.

Hosts of barbarians came down upon the civilized world, the Roman empire. One multitude—though multitude is a feeble word to describe them,—invaded France ¹, which was living in peace and prosperity under the shadow of Rome. They desolated and burned town and country. Seventeen provinces were made a desert. Eight metropolitan cities were set on fire and destroyed. Multitudes of Christians perished even in the churches.

The fruitful coast of Africa was the scene of another of these invasions ². The barbarians gave no quarter to any who opposed them. They tortured their captives, of whatever age, rank, and sex, to force them to discover their wealth. They drove away the inhabitants of the cities to the mountains. They ransacked the churches. They destroyed even the fruit-trees, so complete was the desolation.

Of judgments in the course of nature, I will mention three out of a great number. One, an inundation from the sea in all parts of the Eastern empire. The water overflowed the coast for two miles inland, sweeping away houses and inhabitants along a line of some thousand miles. One great city (Alexandria) lost fifty thousand persons ³.

The second, a series of earthquakes; some of which were felt all over the empire. Constantinople was thus shaken above forty days together. At Antioch 250,000 persons perished in another.

And in the third place a plague, which lasted (languishing and reviving) through the long period of fifty-two years. In Constantinople during three months there died daily 5000, and at length 10,000 persons. I give these facts from a modern writer,

¹ A. D. 407. Vide Gibbon, Hist. vol. v. chap. 30. ² A. D. 430. Vide Gibbon, Hist. vol. vi. chap. 33. ³ A. D. 365. Ibid. vol. iv. chap. 26.

who is neither favourable to Christianity, nor credulous in matters of historical testimony. In some countries the population was wasted away altogether, and has not recovered to this day ¹.

Such were the scourges by which the fourth monster of Daniel's vision was brought low, "the LORD GOD's sore judgments, the sword, the famine and the pestilence²." Such was the process by which "that which letteth," (in St. Paul's language) began to be "taken away;" though not altogether removed even at this day.

And, while the world itself was thus plagued, not less was the offending city which had ruled it. Rome was taken and plundered three several times. The inhabitants were murdered, made captives, or obliged to fly all over Italy. The gold and jewels of the queen of the nations, her precious silk and purple, and her works of art, were carried off or destroyed.

These are great and notable events, and certainly form part of the predicted judgment upon Rome; at the same time they do not adequately fulfil the prophecy, which says expressly, on the one hand, that the ten portions of the empire itself which had almost been slain, shall rise up against the city, and "make her desolate and burn her with fire," which they have not yet done; and, on the other hand, that the city shall experience a *total* destruction, which has not yet befallen her, for she still exists. St. John's words on the latter point are clear and determinate. "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird³; words which would seem to refer us to the curse upon the literal Babylon; and we know how it was fulfilled. The prophet Isaiah had said, that in Babylon "wild beasts of the desert should lie there, and their houses be full of doleful creatures, and owls should dwell there, and satyrs," or devils, "should dance there⁴." And we know that all this has happened to Babylon; it is a heap of ruins; no man dwells there; nay, it is difficult to say even where exactly it was placed, so great is the desolation. Such a desolation St. John

¹ A. D. 540. Ibid. vol. vii. chap. 43.

² Ezek. xiv. 21.

³ Rev. xviii. 2.

⁴ Isai. xiii. 21.

seems to predict, concerning the guilty persecuting city we are considering; and in spite of what she has suffered, such a desolation has not come upon her yet. Again, "she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the LORD God, who judgeth her." Surely this implies utter destruction, annihilation. Again, "a mighty angel took up a stone, like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and *shall be found no more at all.*"

To these passages I would add this reflection. Surely Rome is spoken of in Scripture as a more inveterate enemy of God and His saints even than Babylon, as the great pollution and bane of the earth: if then Babylon has been destroyed wholly, much more, according to all reasonable conjecture, will Rome be destroyed one day.

It may be farther observed, that serious men in the early Church certainly thought that the barbarian invasions were not all that Rome was to receive in the way of vengeance, but that God would one day destroy it by the fury of the elements. "Rome," says one of them, at a time when a barbarian conqueror had possession of the city, and all things seemed to threaten its destruction, "Rome shall not be destroyed by the nations, but shall consume away internally, worn out by storms of lightning, whirlwinds, and earthquakes ¹."

This is what may be said on the one side, but after all something may be said on the other; not indeed to show that the prophecy is already fully accomplished, for it certainly is not, but to show that, granting this, what accomplishment remains has reference not to Rome, but to some other object or objects of divine vengeance. I shall explain my meaning under two heads.

1. First, why has not Rome been destroyed hitherto? how was it that the barbarians left it? Babylon sunk under the

¹ Greg. Dial. ii. 15. Dr. Burton, *Antiq. of Rome*, p. 475, quotes the following passage of St. Malachi's prophecy, (A. D. 1130,) about the line of the Popes, which seems to look the same way. "In the last persecution of the Holy Church, Peter of Rome shall be on the throne, who shall feed his flock in many tribulations. When these are past, *the city upon seven hills shall be destroyed*, and the awful Judge shall judge the people."

avenger whom God brought against it—Rome has not : why is this ? for if there has been a something to procrastinate the vengeance due to Rome hitherto, peradventure that obstacle may act again and again, and stay the uplifted hand of divine wrath till the end come. The cause seems to be simply this, that when the barbarians came down, God had a people in that city. Babylon was a mere prison of the Church ; Rome had received her as a guest. The Church dwelt in Rome, and while her children suffered in the heathen city from the barbarians, so again they were there the life and the salt of the city where they suffered.

Christians understood this at the time, and availed themselves of their position. They remembered Abraham's intercession for Sodom, and the gracious announcement made him, that had there been ten righteous men therein, it would have been saved.

When the city was worsted, threatened, and at length overthrown, the Pagans had cried out that *Christianity was* the cause of this. They said they had always flourished under their idols, and that these idols and devils (gods as they called them) were displeased at them for the numbers among them who had been converted to the faith of the Gospel, and had in consequence deserted them, given them over to their enemies, and brought vengeance upon them. On the other hand, they scoffed at the Christians, saying in effect, "Where is now your God ? Why does He not save you ? You are not better off than we ;" like the impenitent thief, "If Thou be the CHRIST, save Thyself and us ;" or, like the multitude, "If He be the SON of God, let Him come down from the Cross." This was during the time of one of the most celebrated bishops and doctors of the Church, St. Austin ; and he replied to their challenge. He replied to them, and to his brethren also, some of whom were offended and shocked that such calamities should have happened to a city which had become Christian ¹. He pointed to the cities which had already sinned and been visited, and showed that they had altogether perished, whereas Rome was still preserved. Here then he said was the very fulfilment of the promise of God, an-

¹ Austin, de Urbis Excidio, vol. vi. p. 622. ed. Ben. et de Civ. Dei, i. 1—7.

nounced to Abraham; for the sake of the Christians in it, Rome was chastised, not overthrown utterly.

Historical facts support St. Augustine's view of things: God showed visibly, not only provided secretly, that the Church should be the salvation of the city. The fierce conqueror, Alaric, who first came against it, exhorted his troops, "to respect the Churches of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries;" and he gave orders that a quantity of plate, consecrated to St. Peter, should be removed into his Church from the place where it had been discovered¹.

Again, fifty years afterwards, when Attila was advancing against the city, the bishop of Rome of the day, St. Leo, formed one of a deputation of three, who went out to meet him, and was successful in arresting his purpose. A few years afterwards, Genseric, the most savage of the barbarian conquerors, appeared before the defenceless city. The same fearless prelate went out to meet him at the head of his clergy, and though he did not avail to save the city from pillage, yet he gained a promise that the unresisting multitude should be spared, the buildings protected from fire, and the captives from torture². Thus from the Goth, Hun, and Vandal, did the Christian Church shield the guilty city in which she dwelt. What a wonderful rule of God's providence is herein displayed, which occurs daily! the Church sanctifies yet suffers with the world, sharing its sufferings yet lightening them. In the case before us, it has (if we may humbly say it,) suspended, to this day, the vengeance destined to fall upon her who was drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. That vengeance has never fallen; it is still suspended; nor can reason be given *why* Rome has not fallen under the rule of God's general dealings with His rebellious creatures, and suffered (according to the prophecy) the fulness of God's wrath begun in her, except that a Christian Church is still in that city, sanctifying it, interceding for it, saving it. That part of the Christian Church, (alas!) has in process of time become infected with the sins of Rome itself, and learned to be ambitious and cruel after the fashion of those who possessed the place afore-

¹ Vide Gibbon, Hist. vol. v. chap. 31.

² Ibid. vol. vi. chap. 35, 36.

times¹. Yet if it were what some would make it, if it were as reprobate as heathen Rome itself, what stays the judgment long ago begun? why does not the Avenging Arm, which made its first stroke ages since, deal its second and its third, till the city has fallen? Why is not Rome as Sodom and Gomorrah, if there be no righteous men in it?

This then is the first remark I would make as to the fulfilment of the prophecy which is yet to come; perchance, through God's mercy, it may be procrastinated even to the end, and never be fulfilled. Of this we can know nothing one way or the other.

2. Secondly, let it be considered, that as Babylon is a type of Rome, and of the world of sin and vanity, so Rome in turn may be a type also, whether of some other city, or of a proud and deceiving world. The woman is said to be Babylon as well as Rome, and as she is something more than Babylon, namely, Rome, so again she may be something more than Rome, which is yet to come. Various great cities in Scripture are made, in their ungodliness and ruin, types of the world itself. Their end is described in figures, which in their fulness apply only to the end of the world; the sun and moon are said to fall, the earth to quake and the stars to fall from heaven². As then their ruin prefigures a greater and wider judgment, so the chapters of which the text forms a part may have a further accomplishment not in Rome, but in the world itself, or some other great city to which we cannot at present apply them, or to all the great cities of the world together, and to the spirit that rules in them, their avaricious, luxurious, self-dependent, irreligious spirit. And in this sense is already fulfilled a portion of the chapter before us, which does not apply to heathen Rome; I mean the description of the woman as making men drunk with her sorceries and delusions; for such, surely, nothing but an intoxication is that arrogant, ungodly, falsely liberal, and worldly spirit, which great cities spread through a country.

¹ No opinion, one way or the other, is here expressed as to the question, how far, as the local Church has saved Rome, so Rome has corrupted the local Church, or whether the local Church in consequence, or again, whether other Churches elsewhere, may or may not be types of Antichrist.

² Vide Isaiah xiii. 10, &c.

To sum up what I have said. The question asked was, Is not (as is commonly said and believed among us) Rome mentioned in the Apocalypse, as having especial share in the events which will come at the end of the world by means or after the time of Antichrist? I answer this, that Rome's judgments have come on her in great measure, when her empire was taken from her; that her persecutions of the Church have been in great measure judged, and the Scripture predictions concerning her fulfilled; that whether or not she shall be further judged depends on two circumstances, first, whether "the righteous men" in the city who saved her when her judgment first came, may not, through God's great mercy, be allowed to save her still; next, whether the prophecy relates in its fulness to Rome or to some other object or objects of which Rome is a type. And further, I say, that if Rome is still to be judged, this must be before Antichrist comes, because Antichrist comes upon and destroys the ten kings, and lasts but a short space, but the ten kings are to destroy Rome. On the other hand, so far would seem to be clear, that the prophecy itself has not been fully accomplished, whatever we decide about Rome's concern in it. The Roman empire has not yet been divided into ten heads, nor has it yet risen against the woman, whoever she stands for, nor has the woman yet received her ultimate judgment.

We are warned against sharing in her sins, and in her punishment. How shall we feel when the end comes, if we be found mere children of this world and of its great cities; with tastes, opinions, habits, such as are found in its cities; with a heart dependent on human society, and a reason moulded by it! What a miserable lot will be ours at the last day, to find ourselves before our Judge, with all the low feelings, principles, and aims which the world encourages; with our thoughts wandering (if that be possible then), wandering after vanities; with thoughts which rise no higher than the consideration of our own comforts, or our gains; with a haughty contempt for the Church, her ministers, her lowly people; a love of rank and station, an admiration of the splendour and the fashions of the world, an affectation of refinement, a dependence upon our powers of reason,

an habitual self-esteem, and an utter ignorance of the number and the heinousness of the sins which lie against us ! And when the judgment is over, and the saints have gone up to heaven, and there is silence and darkness where all was so full of life and expectation, where shall we find ourselves ? Men now give fair names to sins and sinners ; but then all the citizens of Babylon will appear in their true colours, as the word of God exhibits them, "as dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and lovers and makers of lies."

SERMON IV.

THE PERSECUTION OF ANTICHRIST.

 DANIEL xii. 1.

“ There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time ; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

WE have been so accustomed to hear of the persecutions of the Church, both from the New Testament and from the history of Christianity, that it is well if we have not at length come to regard the account as words of course, to speak of them without understanding what we say, and to receive no practical benefit from having been told of them ; much less are we likely to take them for what they really are, a characteristic mark of CHRIST'S Church. They are not indeed the *necessary* lot of the Church, but at least one of her appropriate badges ; so that on the whole, looking at the course of history, you might set down persecution as one of the peculiarities by which you recognize her. And our LORD seems to intimate how becoming, how natural persecution is to the Church, by placing it among His Beatitudes. “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ;” giving it the same high and honourable rank in the assemblage of evangelical graces, which the Sabbath holds among the ten Commandments,—I mean, as a sort of sign and token of His followers, and, as such, placed in the moral code, though in itself external to it.

He seems to show us this in another way, viz., as intimating

to us the fact, that in persecution the Church begins and ends. He left her in persecution, and He will find her in persecution. He recognizes her as His own,—He framed, and He will claim her,—as a persecuted Church, bearing His Cross. And that awful relic of Him which He gave her, and which she is found with at the end, she cannot have lost by the way.

The text speaks of the great persecution yet to come—and seems referred to by our LORD in His solemn prophecy before His passion, in which He comprises both series of events, both those which attended His first, and those which will attend at His second coming—both persecutions of His Church, the early and the late. He speaks as follows: “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened ¹.”

Having been led, at this season of the year, to speak of that dreadful visitation which will precede the return of CHRIST to judge the world, I mean the coming of Antichrist, I will end the subject now with a few brief remarks on the persecution which will attend it. In saying that a persecution will attend it, I do but speak the opinion of the early Church, as I have tried to do all along, and shall do in what follows.

First, I will cite some of the principal texts which seem to refer to this last persecution.

“Another shall rise after them, and . . . he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, times, and the dividing of time ²:” *i. e.* three years and a half.

“They shall pollute the Sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the Daily Sacrifice, and they shall place the Abomination that maketh desolate, and such as do wickedly against the Covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. And they that

¹ Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

² Dan. vii. 24, 25.

understand among the people, shall instruct many ; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days ¹.”

“ Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do wickedly and from the time that the Daily Sacrifice shall be taken away, and the Abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days ².”

“ Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world ³,” and so on, as I just now read it.

“ The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. . . . And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth ⁴.”

“ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days ⁵.”

“ And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven : and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them . . . and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ⁶.”

“ I saw an Angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand ; and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years and after that he must be loosed a little season and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle : the number of whom

¹ Dan. xi. 31—33.

² Dan. xii. 10, 11.

³ Matt. xxiv. 21.

⁴ Rev. xi. 7—10.

⁵ Rev. xii. 5.

⁶ Rev. xiii. 5—8.

is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city ¹."

These passages were understood by the early Christians to relate to the persecution, which was to come in the last times; and they seem, evidently, to bear upon them that meaning. Our SAVIOUR'S words, indeed, about the fierce trial which was coming might seem at first sight to refer to the early persecutions, those to which the first Christians were 'exposed; and doubtless so they do: yet, violent as these persecutions were, they were not considered by those who suffered them to be the proper fulfilment of the prophecy; and this surely is itself a strong reason for thinking they were not so. And it is confirmed by parallel passages, such as the text, which certainly speaks of a persecution still future; yet surely our SAVIOUR used the very words of the text, and referred to what it refers to; and therefore, whatever partial accomplishment His prediction had in the early Church, He surely speaks of nothing short of the last persecution when His words are viewed in their full scope. He says, "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be: and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." And immediately after, "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." In accordance with this language, the text says, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." One of the passages I quoted from the Revelation says the same, and as strongly: "It was given him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them . . . and all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life ²."

¹ Rev. xx. 1—9.

² Rev. xiii. 7, 8.

Let us then apprehend and realize the idea, thus clearly brought before us, that sheltered as the Church has been from persecution for 1500 years, yet a persecution awaits it, before the end, fiercer and more perilous than any which occurred at its first rise.

Further, this persecution is to be attended with the cessation of all religious worship. "They shall take away the Daily Sacrifice,"—words which the early Fathers interpret to mean, that Antichrist will suppress for three years and a half all religious worship. St. Augustine questions whether baptism even will be administered to infants during that season¹.

And further we are told: "They shall place the Abomination that maketh desolate,"—they shall "set it up:" our SAVIOUR declares the same. What this means we cannot pronounce. In the former fulfilment of this prophecy, it has been the introduction of heathen idols into God's house.

Moreover the reign of Antichrist will be supported, it would appear, with a display of miracles, such as the magicians of Egypt effected against Moses. On this subject, of course, we wait for a fuller explanation of the prophetic language, such as the event alone can give us. So far, however, is clear, that whether real miracles or not, whether pretended, or the result, as some have conjectured, of discoveries in physical science, they will produce the same effect as if they were real, viz. the overpowering the imaginations of such as have not the love of God deeply lodged in their hearts,—of all but the elect. Scripture is remarkably precise and consistent in this prediction. "Signs and wonders," says our LORD, "insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." St. Paul speaks of Antichrist as one "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie²." And St. John: "He doeth great wonders, so that He maketh fire come down from heaven

¹ Augustine.

² 2 Thess. ii. 9—11.

on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast ¹.”

In these four respects, then, not to look for others, will the last persecution be more awful than any of the earlier ones : in its being in itself fiercer and more horrible ; in its being attended by a cessation of the ordinances of grace, “ the Daily Sacrifice ; ” and by an open and blasphemous establishment of infidelity, or some such enormity, in the holiest recesses of the Church ; lastly, in being supported by a power of working miracles. Well is it for Christians that the days are shortened !—shortened for the elect’s sake, lest they should be overwhelmed,—shortened, as it would seem, to three years and a half.

Much might be said, of course, on each of these four particulars ; but I will confine myself to making one remark on the first of them, the sharpness of the persecution.—It is to be worse than any persecution before it. Now, to understand the force of this announcement, we should understand in some degree what those former persecutions were.

This it is very difficult to do in a few words ; yet a very slight survey of the history of the Church will convince us that cruelties more shocking than those which the early Christians suffered from their persecutors, are beyond our conception beforehand. St. Paul’s words, speaking of the persecutions prior to his time, but faintly describe the trial which came upon the Church in his day and afterwards. He says of the Jewish saints, “ They were tortured, not accepting deliverance” they “ had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.” Such were the trials of the Prophets under the Law, who in a measure anticipated the Gospel, as in doctrine, so in suffering ; yet the suffering, when the Gospel came, was as much sharper, as the doctrine was clearer, than their foretaste of either.

¹ Rev. xiii. 13, 14.

To show you to what extent the early persecutions went, I will read you part of an account of one of them in the south of France; and, as I read it, would have you bear in mind the declaration in the text, that there is some suffering still to come, to which none which has hitherto happened, is worthy to be compared, and therefore not even what I am now going to read. It is written by eye-witnesses.

“ . . . The rage of the populace, governor, and soldiers, especially lighted on Sanctus, a deacon; on Maturus, a late convert; on Attalus, and on Blandina, a slave, through whom CHRIST showed that the things which are lowly esteemed among men, have high account with God. For when we were all in fear, and her own mistress was in agony for her, lest she should be unable to make even one bold confession, from the weakness of her body, Blandina was filled with such strength, that even those who tortured her by turns, in every possible way, from morning till evening, were wearied and gave it up, confessing she had conquered them. And they wondered at her remaining still alive, her whole body being mangled and pierced in every part. But that blessed woman, like a brave combatant, renewed her strength in confessing; and it was to her a recovery, a rest, and a respite, to say, ‘I am a Christian.’ . . . Sanctus also endured exceedingly all the cruelties of men with a noble patience . . . and to all questions would say nothing but ‘I am a Christian.’ When they had nothing left to do to him, they fastened red hot plates of brass on the tenderest parts of his body. But though his limbs were burning, he remained upright and unshrinking, steadfast in his confession, bathed and strengthened from heaven with that fountain of living water that springs from the well of CHRIST. But his body bore witness of what had been done to it, being one entire wound, and deprived of the external form of man.”

After some days they were taken to the shows where the wild beasts were, and went through every torture again, as though they had suffered nothing before. Again they were scourged, forced into the iron chair (which was red hot), dragged about by the beasts, and so came to their end. “But Blandina

was hung up upon a cross, and placed to be devoured by the beasts that were turned in." Afterwards she was scourged; at last placed in a basket and thrown to a bull, and died under the tossings of the furious animal. But the account is far too long and minute, and too dreadful, to allow of my going through it. I give this merely as a specimen of the sufferings of the early Christians from the malice of the devil.

Take again the sufferings which the Arian Vandals inflicted at a later time. Out of four hundred and sixty Bishops in Africa, they sent forty-six out of the country to an unhealthy place, and confined them to hard labour, and three hundred and two to different parts of Africa. After an interval of ten years they banished two hundred and twenty more. At another time they tore above four thousand Christians, clergy and laity, from their homes, and marched them across the sands till they died either of fatigue or ill usage. They lacerated others with scourges, burned them with hot iron, and cut off their limbs¹.

Hear how one of the early Fathers, just when the first persecution was ceasing, meditates on the prospect lying before the Church, looking earnestly at the events of his own day, in order to discover from them, if he could, whether the predicted evil was coming.

"There will be a time of affliction, such as never happened since there was a nation upon the earth till that time. The fearful monster, the great serpent, the unconquerable enemy of mankind, ready to devour. . . . The Lord knowing the greatness of the enemy, in mercy to the religious, says, 'Let those that are in Judæa flee to the mountains.' However, if any feel within him a strong heart to wrestle with Satan, let him remain, (for I do not despair of the Church's strength of nerve), let him remain, and let him say, 'Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST?' . . . Thanks to God, who limits the greatness of the affliction to a few days, for the elect's sake those days shall be cut short. Antichrist shall reign only three years and a half," a time, times, and the dividing of time. . . . "Blessed surely he who then shall be a

¹ Gibbon, Hist. chap. 37.

martyr for CHRIST! I consider that the martyrs at that season will be greater than all martyrs; for the former ones wrestled with man only, but these, in the time of Antichrist, will battle with Satan himself personally. Persecuting emperors slaughtered the former; but they did not pretend to raise the dead, nor made show of signs and wonders: but here there will be the persuasion both of force and of fraud, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Let no one at that day say in his heart, 'What could CHRIST do more than *this*? by what virtue worketh he these things? Unless GOD willed it, He would not have permitted it.' No: the Apostle forewarns you, saying beforehand, 'GOD shall send them a strong delusion,'—not that they may be excused, but condemned; those, *viz.* who believe not in the Truth, that is, the true CHRIST, but take pleasure in unrighteousness, that is, in Antichrist Prepare thyself, therefore, O man! thou hearest the signs of Antichrist; nor remind only thyself of them, but communicate them liberally to all around thee. If thou hast a child according to the flesh, delay not to instruct him. If thou art a teacher, prepare also thy spiritual children, lest they take the false for the True. For 'the mystery of iniquity doth already work.' I fear the wars of the nations; I fear the divisions among Christians; I fear the hatred among brethren. Enough; but GOD forbid that it should be fulfilled in our day. However, let us be prepared¹."

To these observations I will add only two remarks: first, that it is quite certain, that if such a persecution has been foretold, it has not yet come, and therefore is to come. We may be wrong in thinking that Scripture foretels it, though it has been the common belief, I may say, of all ages; but if there be, it is still future. So that every generation of Christians should be on the watch-tower, looking out,—nay, the more and more, as time goes on.

Next, I observe that signs do occur from time to time, not to enable us to fix the day, for that is hidden, but to show us it is coming. The world grows old—the earth is crumbling

¹ Cyr. Catech. xv. 16, 17.

away—the night is far spent—the day is at hand. The shadows begin to move—the old forms of empire which have lasted ever since CHRIST was with us, heave and tremble before our eyes, and nod to their fall. They are they which keep CHRIST from us—He is behind them. When they go, Antichrist will be released from that which letteth, and after his short but fearful season CHRIST will come.

For instance: one sign is the present state of the Roman Empire, if it may be said to exist, though it does exist; but it is like a man on his death-bed, who after many throes and pangs, at last goes off when you least expect, or perhaps you know not when. You watch the sick man, and you say every day will be the last; yet day after day goes on—you know not when the end will come—he lingers on—gets better—relapses,—yet you are sure after all he must die—it is a mere matter of time, you call it a matter of time: so is it with the Old Roman Empire, which now lies so still and helpless. It is not dead, but it is on its death-bed. We suppose indeed that it will not die without some violence even yet, without convulsions. Antichrist is to head it; yet in another sense it dies to make way for Antichrist, and this latter form of death is surely hastening on, whether it comes a few years sooner or later. It may outlast our time, and the time of our children; for we are creatures of a day, and a generation is like the striking of a clock; but it tends to dissolution, and its hours are numbered.

Again, another anxious sign at the present time is what appears in the approaching destruction of the Mahometan power. This too may outlive our day; still it tends visibly to annihilation, and as it crumbles, perchance the sands of the world's life are running out.

And lastly, not to mention many other tokens which might be observed upon, here is this remarkable one. In one of the passages I just now read from the book of Revelation, it is said that in the last times, and in order to the last persecution, Satan, being loosed from his prison, shall deceive the nations in the extremities of the earth, Gog and Magog, and bring them to battle against the Church. These words had been already used

by the prophet Ezekiel, who borrows the latter of them from the tenth chapter of Genesis. We read in that chapter, that after the flood the sons of Japheth were "Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras." Magog is supposed to be the ancestor of the nations in the north, the Tartars or Scythians. Whatever then Gog means, which is not known, here is a prophecy that the northern nations should be stirred up against the Church, and be one of the instruments of its suffering. And it is to be observed, that twice since that prophecy was delivered, the northern nations have invaded the Church, and both times they have brought with them, or rather (as the text in the Revelation expresses it) they have been deceived into an Antichristian delusion,—been deceived into it, not invented it. The first irruption was that of the Goths and Vandals in the early times of the Church, and they were deceived into and fought for the Arian heresy. The next was that of the Turks, and they in like manner were deceived into and fought for Mahometanism. Here then history since, as in other instances, is in part a comment upon the prophecy. Now, I do not mean that as to the present time, we see how this is to be accomplished in its fulness, after the pattern of the Shadows which have gone before. But thus much we see—we see that in matter of fact the nations of the North are gathering strength, and beginning to frown over the seat of the Roman Empire as they never have done since the time when the Turks came down. Here then we have a *sign* of Antichrist's appearance—I do not say of his instant coming, or his certain coming, for it may after all be but a type or shadow; still, so far as it goes, it is a preparation, a warning, a call to sober thought—just as a cloud in the sky (to use our Lord's instance) warns us about the weather. It is no sure proof of what is to be, but we think it prudent to keep our eye upon it.

This is what I have to say about the last persecution and its signs. And surely it is profitable to think about it, though we be quite mistaken in the detail. For instance, after all it may not be a persecution of blood and death, but of craft and sub-

tilty only—not of miracles, but of natural wonders and powers of human skill, human acquirements in the hands of the devil. Satan may adopt the more alarming weapons of deceit—he may hide himself—he may attempt to seduce us in little things, and so to move the Church, not all at once, but by little and little from her true position. I do believe he has done much in this way in the course of the last few centuries. I believe he has moved every part of the Church, this way or that way, but some way or other from the truth as it is in JESUS, from the old faith on which it was built “before the division of the east and west¹.” It is his policy to split us up and divide us, to dislodge us gradually from off our rock of strength. And if there is to be a persecution, perhaps it will be then; then, perhaps, when we are all of us in all parts of Christendom so divided, and so reduced, so full of schism, so close upon heresy. When we have cast ourselves upon the world and depend for protection upon it, and have given up our independence and our strength, then he may burst upon us in fury as far as God allows him. Then suddenly the Roman Empire may break up, and Antichrist appear as a persecutor, and the barbarous nations around break in. But all these things are in God’s hand and God’s knowledge, and there let us leave them.

This alone I will say, in conclusion, as I have already said several times, that such meditations as these may be turned to good account. What a curb upon our self-willed, selfish hearts, to believe that a persecution is in store for the Church, whether or not it comes in our days! Surely with this thought before us we cannot bear to give ourselves up to thoughts of ease and comfort, of making money, settling well, or rising in the world. Surely with this thought before us, we cannot but feel that we are, what all Christians really are in the best estate (nay rather would wish to be had they their will, if they be Christians in heart) *pilgrims*, watchers waiting for the morning, waiting for the light, eagerly straining our eyes for the first dawn of day—looking out

¹ Vide Bishop Kenn’s will.

for our SAVIOUR'S coming, His glorious advent, when He will end the reign of sin and wickedness, accomplish the number of His elect, and perfect those who at present struggle with infirmity, yet in their hearts love and obey Him.

May He perform all this in His own good time, according to His infinite mercies! May He give us strength according to our days, and peace at the last.

NOTE.

The following passage from Bishop Horsley's Letters, published in the British Magazine for 1834, is very remarkable, considering it was written nearly forty years since. It is here quoted as bearing on the subject of the foregoing Sermons.

"The Church of GOD on earth will be greatly reduced, as we may well imagine, in its apparent numbers, in the times of Antichrist, by the open desertion of the powers of the world. This desertion will begin in a professed indifference to any particular form of Christianity, under the pretence of universal toleration; which toleration will proceed from no true spirit of charity and forbearance, but from a design to undermine Christianity, by multiplying and encouraging sectaries. The pretended toleration will go far beyond a just toleration, even as it regards the different sects of Christians. For governments will pretend an indifference to all, and will give a protection in preference to none. All establishments will be laid aside. From the toleration of the most pestilent heresies, they will proceed to the toleration of Mahometanism, Atheism, and at last to a positive persecution of the truth of Christianity. In these times the Temple of GOD will be reduced almost to the Holy Place, that is to the small number of real Christians who worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth, and regulate their doctrine and their worship, and their whole conduct, strictly by the word of GOD. The merely nominal Christians will all desert the profession of the truth, when the powers of the world desert it. And this tragical event I take to be typified by the order to St. John to measure the Temple and the Altar, and leave the outer court (national Churches) to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles. The property of the clergy will be pillaged, the public worship insulted and vilified by these deserters of the faith they once professed, who are not called apostates because they never were in earnest in their profession. Their profession was nothing more than a compliance with fashion and public authority. In principle they were always, what they now appear to be, Gentiles. When this general desertion of the faith takes place, then will commence the sackcloth ministry of the witnesses . . . There will be nothing of splendour in the external appearance

of these Churches ; they will have no support from governments, no honours, no emoluments, no immunities, no authority, but that which no earthly power can take away, which they derived from Him, who commissioned them to be His witnesses." B. M. vol. v. p. 520.

There are reasons, not necessary here to mention, for adding, that these Sermons were written several years since.

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