

## Scraps of History.

History teaches lessons not so well taught, if taught at all, anywhere else. And hence he who is not acquainted with history is a great loser. I usually keep by me, at my office, and at my home room, some new books, which I read consecutively, as I can, after finishing my papers, letters, &c. When I have not a new book, I re-read an old one—and generally with much in favor of the old one. Recently I have gone over Letters to Bishop Hughs, Confucius and the Chinese Classics, Memoirs of Dr. Judson, the biographies of A. Campbell, B. W. Stone, J. T. Johnson, Walter Scott, John Smith and others, and with great interest and profit. But a small work called "The Reformation in Europe" has claimed especial thought. The larger works on the Lutheran Reformation are not generally in reach, and few have leisure to go through them. But smaller works all can obtain, and can read. It seems to me that I cannot render a better service than to send some extracts from this work. Beginning at page 5, we have this:

## RISE AND PROGRESS OF CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

"Every one who is acquainted with the uninspired productions of even the early Christians, is compelled to admit the marked difference between them and the books of the New Testament; a difference arising not merely from the fact that inspiration had ceased, and with it the divine style peculiar to those holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but indicating the adoption of sentiments and practices for which no authority is found in the word of the Lord.

The Apostle Paul prophesied of these times. He foresaw the flood of corruption, and forewarned the church of its approach. See 2 Thes. ii.; 1 Tim. i. 3; 2 Tim. iii. 1-5. His words were verified. The state of religion, during the second and third centuries, exhibits melancholy proof of a gradual departure from the simplicity of the Gospel. In perusing the memorials of the times preceding the council of Nice, we observe the various developments of error, and will-worship, and learn the impertinence of simple adherence to Scripture. These memorials are faithful records of the progress of opinions; but the opinions themselves must be brought to the infallible test, that we may "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." 1 Thes. v. 21. Tradition embodies the vagaries of the wayward mind of man; the Bible, and the Bible only contains the word of God.

It will be useful to fix on some important events in church history, and point out the changes that had taken place at their respective dates. The council of Nice may be first mentioned. That celebrated assembly was held A. D. 324. Its principal object was the suppression of Arianism. To secure that object, the Nicene creed was framed, subscribed by the bishops and published as the standard declaration of the faith of the church; while the Emperor Constantine performed his part, by banishing Arius and all who adhered to him. This was the beginning of much mischief.

Hitherto Christians had been persecuted, and the church had thriven in the storm. The sun of prosperity was now shining on her; she was basking in imperial favor; but she bantered her freedom and purity for gold, and becoming an oppressor, sought to defend the truth by the hand of power and the weapon of worldly warfare. This policy was not learned from Christ. "My kingdom," said the Savior "is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight." John xviii. 36.

But at this era a very considerable departure from apostolic purity was discernible. Instead of regarding the

inspired writings as the sole depository of the truth, professing Christians had acted as though the Bible were only one of the sources of religious knowledge. The opinions held by pagan philosophers were in many respects utterly incompatible with the New Testament, and could not be held by believers in Christ without surrendering important Christian principles. It cannot be too deeply deplored that Christianity was modified and mingled with philosophy, and that the simple worship celebrated by the first Christians was quickly corrupted by the introduction of rites and forms borrowed from Jewish or heathen observances. The consequences were fatally injurious. It was a dark day for the church.

The administration of baptism was connected with many ceremonies, which were gradually introduced, and deemed operative as well as significant. The candidate was anointed with oil, marked with the sign of the cross, presented in some places, with milk and honey, and for several days after his baptism was attired in white garments. The Lord's supper began to be called a sacrifice, the table was turned into an altar, and the minister a priest who offered on it. This led to another innovation; Christian ministers were looked upon as substitutes for the priests of the law, or of paganism; and, therefore, the name as well as the office was appointed to them.

To these notices may be added the extravagant honors paid to martyrs, the anniversaries of whose deaths were celebrated by religious services; the observance of numerous fasts and festivals, the invention of new offices and degrees in the ministry, the severe degrading and unscriptural penance, or punishments inflicted on offenders against the laws of the church, and the rise of the monastic system. The results of the whole presents a fearful picture.

Referring to this period, Milner says: "If we look at the external appearance of Christianity, nothing can be more splendid." An emperor, full of zeal for the propagation of the only divine religion, by edicts restores to the church everything of which it had been deprived, indemnifies those who had suffered; honors the pastors exceedingly, recommends to governors of provinces to promote the Gospel, and though he will neither oblige them or any others to profess it, yet he forbids them to make use of the sacrifices commonly made by prefects. He erects churches exceedingly sumptuous and ornamental with distinctions of the parts corresponding, in some measure, to those in Solomon's temple, discovers with much zeal the sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem, real or pretended, and honors it with a most expensive sacred edifice. His mother, Helena, fills the whole Roman world with her magnificent acts in support of religion; and after erecting churches and traveling from place to place to evidence her zeal, dies before her son, aged 80 years.

Nor is the Christian cause neglected, even out of the bonds of the Roman empire, Constantine zealously pleads in a letter to Sapor, king of Persia, for the Christians of his dominions. He destroys idol temples, prohibits impious pagan rites, puts an end to savage fights of gladiators, stands up with respectful silence to hear the sermon of Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, the historian; furnishes him with the volumes of the Scriptures for the use of the churches; orders the observation of the festivals of the martyrs; has prayers and reading of the Scriptures at his court; dedicates churches with great solemnity, makes Christian orations himself, one of which, of a considerable length, is preserved by the historian, his favorite bishop; directs the sacred observations of the Lord's day, to which he adds that of Friday also, the day of Christ's crucifixion.

It may seem insidious to throw any shade on this picture; but though the abolition of lewd, impious and in-

human customs must have been of great advantage to society, and though the benefits of Christianity, compared with paganism, to the world, would appear very strong by these means; yet all this, if sound principle be wanting, is but form and shadow.

The great defectiveness of doctrine failed not to influence practice as usual. External piety flourished; monastic societies, in particular places, were also growing; but faith, love, heavenly mindedness appear very rare. Yet among the poor and obscure Christians I hope there was far more godliness than could be seen at courts and among bishops and persons of eminence. \* \* \* There was much outward religion; but this could make men saints in heart and life. "The facts displayed will show how little true humility and charity were now known in the Christian world; while superstition and self-righteousness were making vigorous shoots, and the real Gospel of Christ was hidden from the men who professed it." (History of the Church, Fourth Century, Chap. ii.)

Resistance to the church exposed the hapless mortal who was guilty of the crime to the fierce vengeance of the State. The alleged heretic (often-time was more orthodox and Christian than his accusers) was turned over to the civil power and treated most mercilessly. The Theodosian code was written in blood; its punishments for heresy and schism would have satisfied Draco himself. Alas! how changed was the state of the body still calling itself the church of God! What a mournful contrast between the times of the Apostles and those of Gregory the great!

The case of Vigilantius furnishes a melancholy illustration of the remarks in the text. That good man was a reformer. He denied the sanctity of relics, refused to worship and burn lights at the tombs of martyrs, and to invoke saints; disapproved of vows of celibacy, of pilgrimages and of nocturnal watchings in cemeteries; doubted the presence of departed spirits at places where their bodies were buried; questioned the tales of miracles said to have been wrought at the sepulchres of martyrs, and protested against the efficacy of prayers, either to or for the dead. For the expression of these opinions he was pursued by Jerome with unrelenting malice. The vocabulary of scurrility was exhausted in the controversy. The only wonder was that Vigilantius escaped without personal violence. He came off very well if he suffered no greater harm than to be called Fool, Blockhead, Madman, Demoniac, Lunatic, Heretic, Arian, Enomian, Samaritan, Jew, Pagan, Infidel, Apostate, Blasphemer, Calumniator, Despisers of Martyr, Bishops and Emperors, Glutton, Sot, Liar, Ass and Dog.—*Jortins remarks on Ecclesiastical History i. 343. Gilly's Waldenses, Valdo and Vigilantius.*

REMARKS.—Vigilantius objected to additions to the divine service, as burning lights at the tombs of martyrs, invoking saints, celibacy, pilgrimages, nocturnal watchings, &c. That is, he desired to cease where and when divine commands ceased. He objected to human additions to the divine system, as if it was not a "perfect law of liberty" without. Others would add salt, oil, making the sign of the cross, putting oil on the ears, toes and thumbs, and salt in the mouth, and then going through certain manipulations to exercise, or drive out the devil, and so prepare the subject for baptism. Faith, repentance and confession were not enough, though all the divine law required. Then, after baptism, they put on white garments, and went through other genuflections of human origin. The simplicity of the Gospel was not enough. So it has ever been among those who corrupt the divine worship. So it will be, if we are not vigilant and earnest in our solemn protests. Many of our own brethren (?) now complain of us

for objecting to human additions to the divine system, even when they cause divisions; and if they do not call us fools, infidels, dogs, asses, &c., they do call us "old fogies."

Well, we will try to be patient, and persevering in the old paths; and if we suffer, we suffer. The purity and simplicity of New Testament worship must be preserved. It is worth suffering for. At this point, and with these facts before us, we should need no labored argument. Who, to-day, strives, or contends for humanisms in the worship, even to "sowing discord among brethren?" Who? Can each one say, Not I?

The next step will be to the age of Gregory VII., the celebrated Heldebrand. He became Pope A. D. 1073. The intervening period was an age of dense darkness. The people were immersed in gross ignorance, and none cared for their souls. If they honored the Virgin Mary and the saints and paid all ecclesiastical dues, and yielded implicit obedience to the dictates of the priests, it was enough. The public services of the church became of little interest to them, being conducted in Latin, a change which was gradually introduced and at length universally enjoined. The effect of it was to insulate the priests from the people, destroying the social character of Christian worship, and exalt the ecclesiastics to an eminence which Christianity never prepared for them, constituting them mediators between God and man, and thus obscuring the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The exaltation of the clergy was manifestly the main object of pursuit during the times now under review. \* \* \*

As a necessary consequence clerical tyranny and exaction increased continually, churches and monasteries abounded with wealth. The clergy claimed exemption from the authority of the civil magistrate, and were declared amenable only to their bishops; while the bishops were not only invested with supreme power over the clergy, but were allowed also to take cognizance of causes between laymen, if one of the parties in the dispute appealed to them. Clerical celibacy gained ground everywhere, and was rigidly enforced, as far as possible, by the superior ecclesiastical authorities. Gregory VII. mainly devoted his energies to the attainment of this his favorite object. No one can wonder that the standard of character among the professed ministers of the church was becoming extremely low. The temptations to vice were so powerful, and immunity from the consequences of the crime so easy to be obtained, that nothing but genuine piety could preserve men from gross delinquencies. Real piety, it has been already stated, was little known and practiced. The description of the prophet were fully applicable to the state of morals and religion in the middle ages. "None calleth for justice or pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter. Yea truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." Isa. lix. 4, 7, 14, 15.

Additions continued to be made to the existing forms of will-worship. The sacraments were authoritatively pronounced to be seven in number, viz.: baptism, confirmation, penance, eucharist, orders, matrimony and extreme unction. Men were taught to kneel at the elevation of the host in the churches, and to place themselves in the same posture in the street whenever the sacred elements were carried to the sick.

Thus a universal control over the actions and purposes of men was secured to the priesthood. The whole community was placed in their hands and subjected to their power. Those who could refuse or grant absolution, and who seemed to have heaven and

hell at their disposal would be feared by all men and obeyed without reserve. Auricular confession was the rivet which fastened almost irrevocably the chain of Rome's tyranny on the human conscience.

But there were not wanting witnesses for truth and godliness. Peter of Bruges, Henry of Lausanne, Arnold of Brescia, and, above all, the Albigenses and Waldenses, lifted up their voices against the enormities of the times and pleaded for Scriptural piety in different ways and with various success. In Great Britain, Wickliffe, at a later period, testified boldly for Christ; denouncing in the strongest terms the errors, superstitions, and vices of the ecclesiastical body, and calling upon all to appeal fearlessly to the word of God. Many noble spirits followed in his course, amongst whom John Huss and Jerome of Prague deserve most honorable mention. The former fell a victim to foul perfidy; his death reflects indelible disgrace upon the council of Constance. The latter, sacrificed under the same authority, bore his sufferings in a manner which extorted admiration from his bitterest foes. Poggio's letter, describing his trial and execution, is a lasting monument to the faith, meekness and patience of the martyr.

Against the servants of God a fiercer war was waged. Unable to meet them in controversy, or deny the truth of the accusations, they brought against anti-Christian corruptions the patrons of these corruptions had recourse to arm and determined to crush those they could not convince. It was easier to kill them than to rely to their arguments; to establish an inquisition than to enquire after the truth. The crusade against the Albigenses under the auspices of Pope Innocent III., is one of the darkest deeds of those dark ages. It required a demon's heart to plan and a demon's heart to execute the horrid purpose. But it is only a picture of the papacy drawn from the life.

Ulric Hutten, a reformer, in a work called the "Roman Trinity" observes: "There are three things a traveler brings away from Rome—a guilty conscience, a disordered stomach and an empty purse. There are three things which are not believed in at Rome—the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead and hell. There are three things which are traded in at Rome—the grace of Christ, ecclesiastical dignities and women," alluding to the papal license to brothels. *D. Aubigne Book i. Sect. 11.*

In the spring of 1522, Zuingli attached the fasts of the Romish church. Personally he continued to observe the rites and ceremonies of the church thinking it proper and even necessary to do so, till the people should be sufficiently enlightened, an object he was earnestly desirous to accomplish. In fulfillment of his purpose he began to inveigh against the superstitious abstinence from meats, as inconsistent with Gospel truth and liberty. This brought upon him a storm of indignation. Information was communicated to the bishop of Constance, who immediately seized the opportunity and sent a deputation at the head of which was Melchior Battli, his coadjutor to investigate the charges brought against Zuingli. Battli was a proud and bigoted opponent of the Gospel. "The ceremonies alone," he said, "are sufficient to bring all men to the knowledge of salvation. All the priests have to do is to explain to the people their signification." He would have put down the reformer without allowing him to be heard. But Zuingli was equal to the encounter. In a short but powerful address he unmasked the folly and baseness of his foes. Addressing the council, he observed: "In every nation, whosoever believes with the heart on the Lord Jesus is saved. Out of that church no person can have life. Our duties as ministers of Christ is to explain the Gospel and obey it. Let those who live by