

The Doom of Christendom;

or, Why are the Judgments Coming?

Paper 4 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.

W. Trotter.

A solemn question this, and one that had need bring into solemn, prayerful exercise, the conscience of each one who considers it. The Lord grant us to discern the answers he has so plainly written in His holy word.

First, it is not because judgment is His delight. Let God be true, but every man a liar. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" If God expostulated thus with Israel of old, we may be sure He is no more willing to execute judgment now on Christendom and on the nations. Nay, where he foretells those judgments in the most solemn terms, He speaks of rising, "that he may do his work his *strange work*, and bring to pass his act, his *strange act*." As to this very period which is passing over our heads, and in which He delays to strike the long threatened blow, it is thus the delay is accounted for: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." No; it is not that God has any pleasure in the destruction of any; but that men despise, alas! the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; after the hardness of their impenitent hearts treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Reader, is this the case with thee? If it be, O that the question may rouse thee from thy slumbers, to consider what thou canst do in the day that God shall deal with thee!

But are there not various spheres of judgment pointed out in prophecy, and may not the judgments be executed in those several spheres on various and distinct grounds? Assuredly, my readers, this diversity does exist. There will be judgments on Israel — judgments on the nations — judgments on Christendom. It is in this last, however, that we are most immediately interested; and it is wise on every account to begin with ourselves. The Lord grant to us an honest desire to know the whole truth, and give us to humble ourselves under His mighty hand!

The Apostle Paul brings the subject before us in a most impressive way in the following passage: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off." (Rom. 11: 22.) Let us attentively weigh these solemn words.

"Toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: *otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off*." Who is it that is here addressed? It must be either an individual professor, or some body of men, personified by the apostle, and addressed as an individual. The context shows that it is not the former, but the latter. The grand subject of the chapter is the partial, temporary setting aside

of Israel, and the bringing in of the present nominal professing body, mainly Gentile, to take the place and sustain the responsibilities of God's people on the earth. God dwelling within the veil of the Jewish sanctuary, and governing the Jewish nation by the law given on Sinai, was the God of the Jews: God, who raised up His Son Jesus from the dead, and placed Him at His own right hand in heaven, sending down the Holy Ghost to proclaim good tidings to lost sinners, is God of the Gentiles also. So the apostle shows at the close of Rom. 3. "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." To the mass of the Jewish nation this was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." They rejected mercy, and were in consequence themselves rejected. But what is it that has taken their place? The nominal, professing body -Christendom: and this is the body here addressed. But if so, why say, "on *them* which fell, severity?" Why not speak of Israel, too, as an individual? Ah! here is the divine beauty of the passage. Israel, as a whole, had *not* fallen, was *not* set aside. There was a remnant from among them according to the election of grace, and this remnant was incorporated with those Gentiles who formed, and have till now formed, the bulk of nominal Christendom. Accordingly, using the figure of an olive tree, we read of some of the branches being broken off, and of a wild olive being grafted in. And it is to that which is represented by this wild olive that the apostle here addresses himself. "Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I (Christendom, the professing body) might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they (the natural branches, the unbelieving Jews) were broken off; and thou (Christendom) standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, (unbelieving Jews,) take heed lest he also spare not thee (Christendom). Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, (the Jews who did not believe,) severity; but toward thee (Christendom) goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Can we fail to see here the detailed comparison between the bulk of the Jewish nation, set aside and broken off for their unbelief, and Christendom, which, by the goodness of God, has been set in the place which they filled as God's people on the earth, and put under the responsibilities inseparable from such a place?

Three points demand consideration. First, What would it have been for Christendom to have continued in God's goodness? Secondly, Has it done this? Thirdly, If not, the inevitable doom pronounced upon it, "otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off."

In ascertaining what it would have been for Christendom to have continued in God's goodness, we need not bring in view the special calling of the Church, or any of its highest privileges and dignities. True, that where these are known, the guilt of the fallen Church is seen to be by them greatly enhanced. But the apostle's entire argument in this chapter is on lower ground than this; and enough is known by professing Christians generally, at least by those who are likely to read this paper, of the distinctive character of Christianity, to lay a groundwork for conviction as to what it would have been to have continued in God's goodness, and is to whether we have done so or not.

What is Christianity? It is the result of the activity of God's love in a world of sinners, towards those who are hopelessly lost and ruined in themselves. The whole world was subject to the just judgment of God, ere the day of Pentecost dawned with its new wonders of divine beneficence and grace. "Now is the judgment of this world" were the words of Jesus as the cross

rose to His view. Jew and Gentile there united, under Satan, the prince and god of this world, to reject, and crucify, and slay the Heir of all things, the Son of God, the Lord of glory! Could human wickedness proceed further? Could it rise to a greater height? Not only had the Jews utterly broken their law, and the Gentiles abused the power entrusted to them of God, and gone into all the abominations detailed in Rom. 1, but when Christ came, the Messiah of the Jews, and a light to lighten the Gentiles, Jews and Gentiles conspired to put Him to death. As to both, it was thus made manifest that "this is the condemnation, that light had come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." This being the world's condition, condemned, under judgment, for rejecting and crucifying the Son of God, why was not judgment executed at once? Ah! there were depths of compassion and grace which God had in store, and which Pentecost was to disclose. What were these? That God had raised up His Son Jesus, and exalted Him to His own right hand, and that, guilty and condemned and hopelessly undone as all men were, all who believed on the name of Jesus should receive remission of sins. The blood of Christ shed by man on earth had availed for man in heaven, and through it God now made Himself known as the merciful yet just justifier of the guiltiest who believed in Jesus.

Such is Christianity. Existing by virtue of the death, and resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, it assumes that man is wicked and condemned, and the world under judgment for the murder of God's Son; but it proclaims God as the Pardoner, instead of the Avenger, of man's sin — as the Justifier, instead of the Condemner, of any one, of every one, who believes in Jesus! This is Christianity. Abounding grace — pardoning mercy — infinite, unfathomable love; and all these exercised *holily* and *righteously* through the sacrifice of Jesus, in the complete, free, everlasting justification of all who believe in Him: all, I say, whatever their country, character, or condition might be. All had sinned, all were lost, all had come short of the glory of God. To all did the gospel, did Christianity, proclaim this free gift of righteousness, through the blood of Jesus, to any one anywhere who, through grace, believed in Him!

Now it was at this the Jews stumbled. It was for the rejection of this gospel of an ascended Christ, that wrath came upon them to the uttermost — that so many of the natural branches were broken off. What riches of divine goodness to confide to Christendom this light, by the rejection of which the Jews in general excluded themselves from all hope of eternal life. Light — not only of perfect holiness and divine love in the person and ways of Jesus as He lived among men, but the light of divine holiness and love as manifested in the cross of Christ. Holiness, which could accept nothing less as a sacrifice for sin than all that He endured on the cross. Love, which met man's utter, perfect hatred and evil, and triumphed over it, by providing and accepting such a sacrifice, and by bestowing, through its efficacy, a free pardon, a perfect righteousness, yea, eternal life, on all, however guilty, who, renouncing all other dependence, simply believe in Christ. This is the light; the pure, the glorious light of God's goodness, confided to Christendom.

Has Christendom continued in this goodness? Has she even done so doctrinally? Do not misunderstand me. I am not asking whether this light still shines. Blessed be God, He has taken care for that. I am not asking whether there have been at all times since Pentecost some who have rejoiced in this light, and been ready to suffer death in its most horrid forms, rather than deny it, or put it under a bushel. Thank God, there always have been such! But has *Christendom continued* thus in God's goodness? Alas! there can be but one answer to this question. IT HAS NOT. The Epistle to the Galatians shows, that even in the apostle's days, the leaven of contrary

doctrine had been introduced among Gentile Christians, and that it wrought so energetically as to threaten to leaven the whole lump. The "hearing of faith" was that by which the Spirit had been ministered to them, and by which they had been introduced into perfect liberty. Those had come to them, however, who taught that unless they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. Faith that worketh by love was not sufficient! They must observe days, and months, and times, and years! A new creation in Christ Jesus would not suffice for those teachers; circumcision, the grand fleshly distinction, must be added thereto! See we not in all this the germ of what afterwards budded, and blossomed, and brought forth full ripe fruit; so that throughout Christendom for dark, dreary ages, *and through a great part of it to this day*, the test of orthodoxy is the denial of that goodness of God in which Christianity had its origin, and of which Christianity was the bright expression? For ages throughout Christendom, and to this day through two-thirds of it, and more, to confess this goodness is to be a heretic; to deny it, and to persecute those who confess it, is to be a good orthodox member of what boasts itself to be the only true Church of Christ! Has Christendom continued in God's goodness? If to denounce, and anathematize, and persecute to prison and to death, those who maintain and confess the grace — the goodness — of God, be to continue in it, then has Christendom continued in it; but not otherwise. "Let him be accursed," is the language of the great bulk of Christendom, as to the man that maintains that the goodness of God is such as to justify and save eternally a poor sinner, who, without one good work to plead, or one ordinance to rely upon, simply believes in Jesus Christ, and confides for salvation only and altogether in His precious blood. And this reader, not for a passing moment, under some temporary evil influence, but the standing doctrine, and abiding course of the greater part of Christendom, recorded in numerous formularies of belief, enforced in as many authoritative decrees, and carried out with a tenacity and rigour which scarcely has a parallel.

My readers may be ready to say, "Yes, but it is Popery you are speaking of, not Christianity. Christianity is to be found among the martyrs and confessors, with whose blood her hands and her skirts are stained." Most readily do I agree to this, but what then? If Popery be not Christianity, it is the religion of a great part of Christendom; and if Christianity be not found with her, but with the victims of her cruelty and rage, what is this but to repeat what has been maintained — that Christendom, of which Rome forms so principal and so predominant a part, *has not continued in God's goodness?* What is the profession and the boast of Rome? *That she is the visible, historical perpetuation of that which commenced with the ministry of Christ and his apostles.* And though it be true, that visible, historical perpetuation, or succession rather, is all that belongs to her, instead of moral, spiritual identity with that which she claims to be, can she escape the responsibility attaching to the character she assumes — the pretensions she makes? Impossible! Nor can we, any of us, escape the admission of the solemn fact, that the blood of the martyrs of Jesus has been shed chiefly, not by the Trajans and the Neros, but by men who claim to be the successors of the apostles, and whose claim is acknowledged by the vast majority of those who bear the Christian name! Christendom has not continued in God's goodness.

It is indeed true that God has never, even in the darkest period, left Himself without witnesses of His grace. And it is also true, that at different seasons He has wrought by His Spirit in special energy, as at the Reformation, the blessed light of which has descended to our own times. But though the word of God was, as it were, disinterred at the Reformation, and the glorious gospel of the grave of God proclaimed to the nations, so as to quicken and emancipate

numbers of souls, and kindle a light the brightness of which still surrounds us; though all this be true, yet nothing took place at that time, nothing has ever taken place, to alter the state and character of the bulk of Christendom. If such an alteration could have reversed the doom which hangs over the nominal, professing body, no such alteration has ever taken place. Rome did, at the time of the Reformation, receive a serious blow; but however it might cause her for a time to reel and stagger, it never thinned the ranks of her adherents more than a third; and she is now, as all are aware, putting forth fresh and unwonted energies, insisting as loudly as ever on all her blasphemous claims, and even preparing to glut herself afresh with the blood of her victims. Then my readers must remember, that if the Reformation had changed the character of Christendom, that would not have fulfilled the condition of continuance in the passage before us: "Toward thee goodness, IF THOU CONTINUE in his goodness: OTHERWISE, thou also shalt be cut off." Restoration is not continuance. nay, it is incompatible with it. That which continues has no need to be, and in fact cannot be, restored. Then besides, as we have seen, if restoration could have averted the impending doom of Christendom, there has been no such thing. Nothing can avert the sentence; and if it could have been averted, there is and has been nothing to avert it; *"thou also shalt be cut off."*

Thus far our attention has been confined to what it would have been, and that in the lowest sense, for Christendom to have continued in God's goodness doctrinally — and we have seen that beyond all, controversy it has not. But let us look further, and inquire whether Christianity was not intended to be a living exhibition and testimony of God's goodness, and that in two ways. First, as conveying to all nations the tidings of God's grace to lost sinners; and secondly, as exhibiting the blessed fruit of this grace in those who professed to be partakers of it. Let us see whether, in respect to both these points also, Christendom has, or has not, continued in God's goodness.

There is this essential difference between Judaism and Christianity, that the one was local and stationary, the other diffusive and missionary. Judaism was the worship of a people who had been outwardly brought nigh to God, and who needed a priesthood through whom to approach God. Christianity, as we have seen, takes for granted that all men, whether outwardly nigh or far off, are really lost — dead in sins. it proclaims the love God has had to such, the work Christ has done for such; and it makes known that all the riches of God's love, and all the efficacy of Christ's work, are the portion of any poor sinner anywhere who, through grace, *believes* in Christ. What flows from this is, that all being alike by nature dead in sins, and all who truly *believe* being alike brought nigh by the blood of Christ, all such distinctions as existed in Judaism between priests and people are unknown in Christianity, *save as respects our Great High Priest*, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is through Him we draw nigh to God: but as all believers have equal title and privilege through Him to draw near, all Christians are priests, and all alike are priests. All alike are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;" called to "tell abroad the virtues (*hopos tas aretas exaggeilete*) of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." A privileged class of priests, nearer to God than their brethren, did exist in Judaism, but is a fiction unknown to Christianity. Christ alone has such a special, distinctive priesthood.

But if a class of priests, essential as it was to Judaism, is thus unknown in Christianity, Christianity has, what Judaism had not, a ministry of love, suited to its own wondrous character,

as the fruit of the active interference of God's love on behalf of sinners. I speak not now of ministry within the Church, where the Holy Ghost acts by the varied gifts which he bestows and uses, "dividing to every man severally as he will;" but of that active service of love, which has the whole world for its sphere, and which consists in beseeching men to be reconciled to God. "God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5: 18-20.) Such was the ministry by which Christianity was distinguished. For the fulfilment of it, the apostles and others were endowed with the Holy Ghost: and as to this, and its range, the words of Christ were — "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Such were the commands of the risen Saviour; and how they were, for a while, fulfilled! How Paul, for instance, constrained by the love of Christ, and undaunted by all the gigantic forces arrayed against him, went onward in the mission of mercy, proclaiming himself debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise, ready, as much as was in him, to preach the gospel at Rome, or wherever his Master opened the door. What countries he traversed! What seas he crossed! What perils he braved! What hardships he endured! What a work God accomplished by his means! Was this then the genuine spirit of Christianity? Who dare say it was not? Let us use it then as a standard, and ask, in the light of it, has Christendom continued in God's goodness? Alas! even in his own life-time, Paul had to say that he had no man like-minded to his beloved Timothy, who was, indeed, a worthy companion of his toils! But where have been the Pauls, where have been the Timothys, since that day? Alas! when ordinances began to take the place of Christ, human merit to be substituted for God's grace, and works to be put in the place of faith; when the very doctrine of God's goodness as distinctive of Christianity began thus to be obscured, the sure and natural consequence ensued. The only motive to missionary zeal and labour being gone, Christendom ceased to be missionary in its character. As this loving ministry to souls declined, pretensions to distinctive priesthood were put forward; and these suited the state of souls not half rescued from Paganism, and strangers to the liberty and grace of the gospel. The downward course became more and more rapid, until Christendom accepted, in lieu of Christianity, a hideous, disproportioned mixture of Judaism, Paganism, and Philosophy, with a few christian doctrines and phrases to save appearances, and keep up some connection with the form of that pure and heavenly system, whose, whole spirit and life had evaporated and fled. The only missions which for centuries emanated from Christendom, were conducted by ambitious priests, who employed false miracles and political stratagems, to induce uncivilized hordes of men to embrace and endow the spurious Christianity thus introduced among them.

"Ah!" says my reader, "but it is of Romanism again that you are treating. Has there been no change in this respect since the Reformation?" Yes, indeed, thank God, there has been. The moment the gospel of God's grace began again to be proclaimed and believed, it began to produce a missionary spirit. To be sure for a time the missions of the Reformation were chiefly directed to countries where Popery, not Paganism, reigned. But after the great revival in the last century, a missionary spirit began to manifest itself in other directions; and this century has been distinguished by its missionary enterprises. And while many may have questions as to some parts

of the machinery with which missionary labours are connected, there can be but one sentiment among those who love Christ, is to the fact of those labours, and of the gospel being conveyed to the dark places of the earth. But Protestant Christianity boasts of its missions, and many expect, as the result of them, the universal spread of the gospel, and the introduction of millennial days. Yea, some who read this and the preceding papers may be inclined to resent the thought of approaching judgments being introductory to millennial blessing, as though we questioned the sufficiency of the gospel, and the power of the Holy Spirit to make it effectual to the world's conversion. If this be your feeling, dear reader, bear with me in pressing on your attention an inquiry or two which you may not have considered.

Do you really believe, then, that the gospel was designed to convert the whole world, and that the Church has been entrusted with it, and endowed with the Holy Ghost for this end? Then what say you to the conduct of Christians for the last eighteen centuries in caring so little for the diffusion of the gospel, and making so little progress toward the end you contemplate? You will admit, no doubt, that this is lamentable — that the conduct of the Church is inexcusable; but then you hope that she will yet be aroused to a sense of her duty, and go forth in her might to convert the nations of the earth. But be entreated to ponder one question as to this, Has God no controversy with us for eighteen centuries of neglect and unfaithfulness and sin? Now without saying as you do, that the gospel, or the Church, was intended to convert the world, one may well be bold to affirm two things: first, that the Church was called to be so faithful a witness and messenger of Christ, as not to leave one individual of the human family without the tidings of salvation through His name; secondly, that each individual to whom such a message comes is responsible to God for its reception. And what is it but apathy, and worldliness, and love of carnal ease and indulgence, that has hindered the gospel from being proclaimed to every living person on the globe? The discovery of gold fields in a given island attracts thither in a single year from forty to fifty thousand — British Christians, I had almost said; and in name at least they are so. But if Christ were only as dear to us, my brethren, and souls as precious in our eyes, as gold is to the natural heart, why should not from forty to fifty thousand missionaries go out in the course of a single year to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ? Protestant missions! Why, if a hundredth part of the energy was employed in endeavouring to spread the gospel which is devoted to the pursuit of wealth, in a short time there would not be a country, or a village, or a hamlet, where its sound had not been heard. And have we, no account to render, my brethren, for unfaithfulness in such stewardship? Has God no controversy with Christendom on this account? Has Christendom in this respect continued in God's goodness? The fact is — but the proof of it we must reserve for another occasion — it is restored Israel that is to "blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit." When Christendom, the wild olive, has been for its non-continuance in God's goodness cut off, the natural branches are to be grafted in again to their own olive tree; and, as far as human instrumentality is to be employed in that work, they are to be the instruments of subduing the whole world to Christ's sway. To Christians belonged the privilege, even as on them devolved the responsibility, of bearing testimony to that perfect grace and goodness in which God has, through the sacrifice of Christ, found a way holily and righteously to justify the ungodly, who, through grace, believe in Christ. Alas, how this privilege has been slighted! How this responsibility has been forgotten! How Christendom has failed to continue in God's goodness! How certain and inevitable the consequence "thou also shalt be cut off! "

Another point demands our attention. It was not only by the active diffusion of the gospel, that Christianity was designed to be a living manifestation of God's goodness: its actual effect on Christians themselves, was intended to answer the same end. To teach others what they themselves practically denied was the sin of the natural branches; (see Rom. 2;) and it could never be God's purpose that Christians, who were grafted in when they were broken off, should doctrinally make Him known, while denying Him by their works. Accordingly, our Lord Himself, and the apostles, lay the utmost stress on the living, practical manifestation by Christians of that grace by which they have been saved, and in which they stand. "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on an hill cannot be hid. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." It were easy to proceed quoting passages like these, and equally so to put it to the consciences of my readers, whether we (that is, professing Christians at large) have thus glorified God, and shone as lights in the world. There could be, alas! but one verdict as to this. But let the question be narrowed, and brought even to a readier issue than this, It has pleased our blessed Lord to make known to us in the most explicit way, how we might have led the world to believe that the Father had sent Him. He had previously said to the disciples, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." But in the passage I refer to, it is the Father Himself who is addressed by our Lord. Nor is it merely for the apostles, or the disciples then living, that He prays. He has been praying for them; but this is what He goes on to say — "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one: is thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17: 20, 21.) Am I assuming too much as to the meaning of these words, in taking for granted, that the unity among His followers, for which the Saviour asks, is a visible unity? How else could it act upon the world, and induce them to believe that the Father has sent His Son? Now such a unity did, in the earliest days of Christianity, exist. "And all that believed were together." (Acts 2: 44.) "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." (Acts 4: 32.) There was then, for a little space, the manifestation, practically, as well as in doctrine, of that goodness of God which Christianity was to make known. Has Christendom, in this respect, continued in God's goodness? I speak not now of the church of Rome. She pretends to unity — visible unity. What the character and value of her unity is, we may by and bye inquire. But in the great revival of gospel light at the Reformation, a mercy for which we can never sufficiently bless God, was there any recovery of the Church's original position and character in respect to visible unity? Alas! my brethren, however humbling the acknowledgement, it is impossible for any of us to refuse it, that wherever that light has most clearly shone, division upon division has taken place. I say not that these divisions are the result of the light which dawned afresh at the Reformation.

God forbid. But, that they have been its accompaniments, who call deny? Supposing, that in this question of whether we have continued in God's goodness, Rome could be entirely left out, and the question limited to the sphere within which the light of the Reformation has shone, can it be said within that sphere, that believers are so manifestly one as to constrain the world to believe that the Father has sent the Son? My brethren, is this the case? Or, is it not undeniable,

that our divisions, glaring and multitudinous as, alas! they are, form at once the taunt of Rome, and the favourite plea of the infidelity of the age, which demands of us to agree among ourselves, ere we challenge the submission of heart and intellect to the revelations which Scripture contains? True, indeed, that neither the taunts of Rome, nor the excuses of infidelity, can shift off the responsibility from men's own souls, to hearken to what God says: — our divisions can be no real excuse for either the one or the other: — but are we the less really culpable for this? We were to have been, by our visible unity, a light to attract men to Christ. Instead of this, by our divisions, we are a stumbling-block in their way. True, that none stumble but those who wish for some pretence for rejecting Christ. But are we the less guilty, to furnish such pretences to those who wish them? I say nothing as to the causes of our divisions: I say nothing here as to a remedy, or as to whether there be one. It is *the fact* to which I would fain draw the solemn, prayerful attention of my brethren. It is worse than useless casting the blame on one another. We are all responsible for it. It is our common sin, our common shame. But then it is connected, inseparably connected, with a solemn, irrevocable sentence: — "toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: *otherwise* (and is not this the clause that applies to us?) *thou also shalt be cut off.*"

Rome does, indeed, pretend to unity, and boasts of it as one of her chief claims to universal homage. But what is the unity on which she prides herself? Is it the unity of the Spirit? the holy unity, for which the Saviour prays in the passage we have been considering? Precious as true unity is, there is something which precedes it. Those for whose real and manifested unity the Saviour prays, had been previously described by Him. And how had He described them? Hear His words: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." They had been given to Him *out of the world*. But again: "I have given them thy word: and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Again, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Once more, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." They for whose unity Jesus prays the Father, are those who, in the midst of a world which knows neither the Father nor Jesus, have been separated from that world by the vital knowledge of both. They are no more of the world than Jesus was; objects, moreover, of the world's hatred, as was their Master. Long before this, Jesus had said to those who would have had Him accredit the world as it then was, "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." (John 7: 6, 7.) this unworldly character is that by which He here describes those for whose manifested unity He prays. And what an answer to His prayer does the Church in its earliest days present! Its unity we have already seen. Its unworldliness, and the effect upon beholders of the manifested presence of God in its midst, are strikingly depicted in Acts 5: 12-14: "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." There was an attraction which none could resist, — the people magnified them. Still, they were so obviously the habitation of God — God so manifested His presence among them — that of the rest durst no man join himself to them. None but true believers durst venture so near God as to enter their assembly, though all magnified them, and believers were added, multitudes both of men and women. Is it unity like this that Rome boasts? Alas! it is a unity accomplished and maintained by calling the world the Church, baptizing whole nations in the name of Christ

pretending to regenerate them thus, and bring them within the pale of the Church of Christ. Instead of a holy unity with Christ, and the Father, and each other, of those who by the Holy Ghost have been brought to know the Father, and Jesus whom He hath sent, and who have been separated thus from the world which knows neither the Father nor the Son, it is a unity of the world under the name of Christ; a unity of those who, instead of being hated by the world, as Christ was, are themselves the world, which hates and persecutes, to prison and to death, the true confessors of Christ's name. Such is the boasted unity of Rome: a unity, to stand apart from which one needs no other warrant, and could not have a more solemn necessity, than is found in those words of scripture, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18: 4.)

But may we not, my brethren, put it seriously to our consciences, whether Romanism be the only form of Christianity which accredits and seeks to sanctify the principle of union with the world? "To whom coining, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." (1 Peter 2: 4.) The Christ with whom the first Christians were identified was a Christ *disallowed of men*. Is it so with us, my brethren? "Ye adulterers and adulteresses," says another apostle, "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." (James 4: 4.) What is the indictment against Babylon in Rev. 17 and 18? There are many counts in it, doubtless, and I am not enquiring after them all. But what is it that is the head and front of her offending? "Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." It is this spiritual harlotry — this alliance with the world, its kings, and its inhabitants, of that which bears the name of Christ and pretends to be his spouse, which is the grand predominant characteristic of what is here described. And is that characteristic confined to Rome? I enter into no particulars; my object is not detail; but I put it to your consciences, my brethren, can Reformed Christianity, whether in this country, on the continent of Europe, or in America, plead perfect innocence of this spiritual uncleanness? I refer to no questions between Establishments and Dissent, between one form of Protestant Christianity and another. Does not the conscience of each testify that the sin lies more or less at his own door? Alas! who of us is clear? Does not union with the world, instead of separation from it, characterize Christendom in the mass — Christendom, whether Greek, Romish, or Reformed? And what shall be the end of these things? What says the Scripture we have been considering? "Toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off."

And now, my readers, let me ask you, Can there be a doubt as to the three points which were to be considered? Had the Church remained what it was at first, the bright witness of God's free love to lost, ruined sinners — had she, in the activity of love and the power of the Holy Ghost, fulfilled her mission in making known this love of God to every creature — had she continued, by her manifested unity, to be herself the living expression of this love — and had she maintained her holy separateness from the world, as Christ did, while serving it, and bearing testimony in it, and to it; then had she continued in God's goodness. As to the question whether she has done this, we have seen, alas! that for many centuries the great mass of those who have borne the christian name have been, and are still, deniers, *even doctrinally*, of that goodness of God which is the grand distinction of Christianity: that instead of making this goodness known to all mankind, we are so absorbed, alas! in other pursuits, that in one short year mammon can

number far more pilgrimages in search of gold than the whole course of the christian era can number in search of souls; that instead of our unity attracting souls to Christ, our divisions repel them, and afford occasion of stumbling and offence to those who wish it: while our worldliness, alas, is written on our foreheads, and needs no one to proclaim it! Then, as to the third point, we have seen that the consequence is inevitable. The sentence has gone forth, and cannot be revoked. Excision must take place. "Thou also shalt be cut off." What a prospect! How different from the dreams of increasing light and progress and blessing indulged by most! How terrible the surprise, to be awakened from such dreams by the fulfilment of the sad reality! "Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rend it. . . . So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek. 13: 10-14.) True, these words were spoken of the prophets of Israel, which prophesied concerning Jerusalem, and which saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace. But is there nothing in the passage to be a warning to us? When God says Christendom shall be cut off, and men say that it shall flourish yet more and more, till the whole world be converted and the Millennium introduced, is it less grievous in His eyes for a false peace to be preached to Christendom, than it was for false prophets to see visions of peace for Jerusalem when there was no peace? Will a wall cemented with such untempered mortar be more enduring in the present dispensation than the last? Does not our Lord, speaking of His day, the day of the coming judgments, say that "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth?" Does not Paul tell us, "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape?" Does not Babylon's overthrow take place in the moment of her proudest exultation, and fullest fancied security? "For she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." And is not the word to Sardis quite as solemn? "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Reader, "he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear!"

Let us not, however, confound the prospects of the true Church of Christ with the impending doom of Christendom? Ere the deluge came on the guilty inhabitants of the old world, Enoch was translated to heaven, while Noah was preserved through all the swellings of the flood to re-people and replenish the earth. Ere the cities of the plain were destroyed by fire, Abraham was in communion with God as to their approaching doom, pleading that if possible they might be spared; while Lot was sent out from the midst of the overthrow. When most of the natural branches were broken off for their unbelief, there was, as the apostle tells us, a remnant according to the election of grace; and these, as we know, were incorporated along with Gentile believers, in the one body of Christ — the elect body, the completion of which is that for which alone God waits, ere He begins to deal afresh with the earth in judgment. The heaviest judgments are to fall on Christendom, for its non-continuance in God's goodness. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." But ere judgment comes on Christendom, the true Church will have been, like

Enoch, translated to heaven. This heavenly hope of the true Church we considered at large in *The Heavenly Hope*. The natural branches, a remnant of Jews, will, like Noah and like Lot, be preserved through all the judgments, and grafted once more into their own olive tree. These, with many spared Gentiles, will form the population of the millennial earth, over which Christ and His glorified saints will reign. Those Jews who believed in Christ at the commencement of the present dispensation were introduced, prior to the judgments that came on their nation, into a far higher and better position, even into that of being members of Christ's body, the Church. So, at the close of the present period, ere the sentence of excision is executed on Christendom, the true Church will be raised to its own place in heavenly glory with its Head. At Pentecost, and for some time afterwards, the Church and Christendom were identical: the Church was Christendom, and Christendom was the Church. We know, however, how evil men crept in unawares, how the enemy sowed tares among the wheat, how grievous wolves entered in, not sparing the flock, and perverse men arose, drawing away disciples after them. We know how the mystery of iniquity, which wrought even in the apostles' days, has continued to work, and how, as the result, *Christendom* has not continued in God's goodness. But, notwithstanding this, the true Church has never ceased to exist. Through this whole dark period, all who, through grace, have been quickened to believe in Christ, have been identified with His position in heavenly places, and have been, in fact, and are, His body, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who forms and fashions them, by heavenly hopes, for heavenly blessedness and glory. The cutting off of Christendom, need I say, will not touch the life of one single member of this elect body, or bride of Christ "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Because I live, ye shall live also." But how are we to use this precious certainty of everlasting life? Surely not to reconcile ourselves to those evils, or to connivance at those evils, which are drawing down the heaviest judgments of God on that which professes the name of Christ. That would be to "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness" indeed. No, let us rejoice in the assured, unfailing certainty of being with our Head and Bridegroom in the glory which has been given to Him, and which He has given to us; let us the more bless God for it, seeing the end that awaits the poor world around us — the *christian* world, (sad paradox and contradiction!) as it terms itself; but let us never forget that "he that hath this hope in him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Never let us seek to reconcile ourselves to anything which will not bear the light of His coming glory. What that glory will consume is no object for our affections or pursuit. The Lord grant us the full sanctifying power of the heavenly hope which sovereign grace has made, with such precious certainty, our own.

With Christendom we are sufficiently identified by a common profession of Christianity, and by personal participation, alas! in its sins, to feel the sentence of excision pronounced on it, to be a loud call on us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It was when Josiah was informed that nothing could cause the sentence to be revoked, which had gone forth against Jerusalem and Judah, personal exemption indeed being promised to him, that he still further humbled himself before the Lord, and set about promoting a reformation, which had till then no parallel in the nation's history. The judgments could not be averted, and they were not: but Josiah's penitence was fully owned of God; and the reformation, he was used to bring about, was a bright testimony for God, on the very eve of the nation's overthrow. Oh for something of his spirit! "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest His words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself

before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me: I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same." (2 Chr. 34: 27, 28.) We, my brethren, are not comforted by the assurance of being gathered to the grave in peace, but by the hope of being gathered to meet the Lord in the air, so that when the judgments come, we shall not be amid the scene on which they are poured, but in the heavens whence they issue. But surely the effect of such a hope, is not to make the heart indifferent to the dishonour cast on Christ's name by the sins of those who bear it, whether really or in profession only. We are identified with that to which Christ has, in his absence, so to speak, entrusted His glory; and can we refuse to bow our heads, and, by confessing our sin, and bearing the shame and sorrow of it before Him, justify Him in those judgments by which, ere long, He will vindicate His despised and dishonoured claims; and make manifest, that however we may have forgotten His glory He remembers it, and knows how to assert and manifest it, to the glory of His Father, the joy of His saints, the confusion of His adversaries, and the deliverance of an oppressed and groaning creation! To His name be glory for ever.