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NEW INTERPRETATION OF THE
APOCALYPSE.

The Apocalypse of St. John: or, Prophecy of the Rise, Progress, and Fall, of the Church of Rome; the Inquisition; the Revolution of France; the Universal War; and the final Triumph of Christianity—being a new Interpretation. By the Rev. George Croly, A.M. H. R. S. L.

Our readers are aware of the infinite difficulties which have been hitherto supposed to beset this portion of Scripture, even to the extent of making it nearly useless to the general purposes of revelation. The view which the present writer takes, leads him to state that the Apocalypse is not merely a prophecy, but of all prophecies the greatest, and connected, in the closest degree, with the present circumstances of the world; in fact, a most powerful, divine illustration of the agency of Providence in the conduct of Christendom in the past, and at once a terrible and magnificent display of the Divine interposition in those mighty changes of the world, which the prophecy declares to be now rapidly approaching—civil convulsions—extensive war—and the final upbreking of the system of nations, to make way for a more exalted and purified state of human society.

This interpretation is made out by abandoning the old forms, which led the commentators into perplexity, and establishing a new arrangement of three well known series—the Seals, Trumpets, Vials. The work is stated to be wholly original, and to be, in its chief part, even directly in opposition to the arrangements of the preceding writers. The leading events of European history, since the Vaudois Reformation in the twelfth century, are alleged to have been peculiarly predicted in passages hitherto misconceived, and the French Revolution to be detailed at remarkable length in a chapter hitherto idly applied to the Saracen invasions. We, of course, have not space to go into minuteness in these matters; but we may gratify our readers by a specimen of the style and manner of thinking of the writer.

The volume is not devoted wholly to the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Nearly one-third of it is occupied with a luminous, though rapid, outline of the history of the Church. Mr. Croly is no ordinary writer. He has learning, various and extensive—great vigour of mind—and a powerful command of language. These several excellencies are all displayed in the volume now before us. It is dedicated to the Lord Bishop of Salisbury, a prelate whose high character for all that does honour to his station, for intelligence, virtue, and literature, argues well for any writer to whose work he has, as in this instance, permitted the sanction of his name.

The present interpretation is, as is stated in the introduction, wholly original, having been without reference to any of the preceding writers; is new in the arrangement, the mode of elucidation, and the nature of its discoveries; and is, according to Mr. Croly's statement, thus grounded—

“The Apocalypse is a collection of divine visions, seen probably at different times, but all during the apostle's exile (at Patmos). It consists of six portions:—The vision of the Asiatic persecution. The vision of the Seals, or general view of Providence in the government of the church and the world—beginning with the period of Constantine, and ending with the close of the final age of mankind. The vision of the Trumpets; the vision of the Vials, which two are nearly identical and describe the inflictions said upon the persecutors of the church, beginning from the establishment of the inquisition, and closing with the final ruin of the

popedom, and in the triumph of Christianity. The vision of the Church, distinguished into three eras of pagan persecution, and the catastrophe of her oppressors, and the vision of the Triumph of Christianity.

“It will be shewn in the course of the interpretation, that this prophecy includes in the most direct manner, all those great events which make the frame work of history since the first age of Christianity, that it distinctly predicts the establishment of the Church under Constantine and his successors; the overthrow of the Roman empire; the erection of the barbarian kingdoms on its ruins; the rise of the popedom; the establishment of the inquisition; the persecution of the first reformers; the successive punishments laid on Italy, Spain, and France; as the three powers by which the Inquisition was let loose against Protestantism, namely, the destruction of the Spanish armada, the civil war following the overthrow of Protestantism in France, in 1685, the wars of Louis XIV., the French Revolution, and the final and universal wars.”

“It will be seen, by a comparison with any of the preceding commentaries, that this arrangement differs from them all in many important features, but peculiarly in the juxtaposition of the Trumpets and Vials, whose extreme similarity has hitherto struck our readers, yet which have been treated, in deference to the errors of the early commentators, Mede, &c., as relating to totally different events, centuries asunder. The result of this separation has been remediless confusion. In the present volume it is shewn, that the two series begin from the same point—the establishment of the Inquisition, and continue together; the Trumpets giving the civil and political view of the events, the Vials the ecclesiastical; and both ending in the universal war, which the interpretation shows to be the next great event to the French Revolution, and to be, in fact, approaching rapidly—its approach being declared in the prophecy to be accompanied by certain signs, which our common experience admits to be obvious at the present hour, viz. the extraordinary distribution of the Bible, the continued influence over Europe of the four great powers, by whom the French empire was put down, &c.

The universal war is shewn to be predicted at the close of no less than four of the visions, and to be detailed with circumstances of measureless terror. It is fully shewn from the prophecy that it shall be ushered in by a sudden revival of atheism, superstition, and religious violence, acting upon the European nations until they are inflamed into war. All the elements of terror and ruin shall be roused; Protestantism persecuted; Popery, after a momentary triumph, utterly destroyed; a general shock of kingdoms consummated by some vast and palpable development of the Divine Power, at once protecting the Church, and extinguishing in remediless and boundless devastation, infidelity and idolatry.

This prophecy takes successively the language of the prophets exulting over the fall of the great and opulent cities of the East, the broken sceptres, the spoiled wealth and burning palaces and temples of Tyre and Babylon; the still sterner denunciations over the crimes of Jerusalem; the images of wild and sudden invasion, and hopeless battle; the massacre, the conflagration, the final crush of polity, power, and name. Even the agencies of nature are summoned to deepen the prediction, earthquakes and subterraneous fire, lightnings and ponderous and fatal hail. And in the midst of this chaos of bloodshed, fire and tempest, towers the form of the Avenger, flashing with terrible lustre, crowned and armed with the power and wrath of Deity against a world that has

for so many ages of long suffering resisted his Spirit, worshipped idols, and enslaved and slain his people—God, a consuming fire!—It is further declared, that this catastrophe is now approaching, hour by hour; that the French revolution was to have been the last great event before it; with but a brief intervening period, occupied by Providence in preparing and securing the true Church, in spreading the Scriptures, and in giving a last opportunity to the unbeliever and the idolater to accept the truth of God. The Apocalypse thus assumes the rank of not merely an elucidation of the Divine will in the past, nor an evidence of the general truth of Christianity, but of a warning of the highest and most pressing nature to all men, in the entire range of human society. It is not the mere abstract study of the theologian, nor the solitary contemplation of the man of piety; but a great document addressed to the mighty of the earth; wisdom calling out trumpet-tongued to the leaders of national councils; the descended ministers of Heaven summoning for the last time the nations to awaken to the peril already darkening over their heads, and cut themselves loose from those unscriptural and idolatrous faiths with which they must otherwise go down; the Spirit of God commanding the teachers and holders of the true faith to prepare themselves for the cultivation of their powers, by a vigilant purity, by a generous and hallowed courage, for that high service of God and man in which they may so soon be called on to act, and perhaps to suffer, and proclaiming to all men alike the infinite urgency of redeeming the time before the arrival of a period that to the whole world of idolatry, European and Barbarian, shall come with a civil ruin, of which the subversion of Jerusalem was—but a type, and with a physical destruction that can find no parallel but in the inevitable fury of the deluge.”

The subjoined extract occupies more space than we commonly assign to a notice of a new publication; but we should not have done justice to the author's chain of reasoning, or to his series of historical facts, had we mutilated it. It exhibits a striking and original view of the influence of Popery upon the political condition of this country, at various periods.

“There is the strongest reason for believing, that as Judea was chosen for the especial guardianship of the original Revelation, so has England been chosen for the especial guardianship of Christianity.

“The original Revelation declared the one true God; Paganism was its corruption, by substituting many false gods for the true. The second Revelation, Christianity, declared the one true mediator. Popery was its corruption, by substituting many false mediators for the true. Both Paganism and Popery adopted the same visible sign of corruption, the worship of images.

“The Jewish history opens to us a view of the acting of Providence with a people appointed to the preservation of the faith of God. Every tendency to receive the surrounding idolatries into a participation of the honours of the true worship, every idolatrous touch, was visited with punishment, and that punishment not left to the remote working of the corruption, but immediate, and, by its directness, evidently designed to make the nation feel the high importance of the trust, and the final ruin that must follow its betrayal.

A glance of the British history since the Reformation is enough to show how closely this providential system has been exemplified in England. Every reign which attempted to bring back Popery, or even to give it that share of power which could in any degree prejudice Protestantism, has

been marked by signal misfortune. It is striking circumstance that almost every sign of this Popish tendency has been followed by one purely Protestant; and, to make the source of the national calamity plain to all eyes, those alternate reigns have not suffered a stronger contrast in their principles than in their public fortunes. Let the rank of England be what it may under the Protestant Sovereign, it will sink under the Popish; let its loss of honour, or of power, be what it might under the Popish Sovereign, it always recovers under the Protestant, and more than recovered; was distinguished by sudden success, public renovation, and increased stability, the freedom and fortunes of the empire.

Protestantism was first thoroughly established in England in the reign of Elizabeth. Mary had left a dilapidated kingdom, the nation was worn out with disaster and debt; the national arms disgraced; nothing in vigour but popery. Elizabeth, at twenty-five, found her first steps surrounded with the most extraordinary embarrassments at home, the whole strength of a party, including the chief names of the kingdom, hostile to her succession and religion; Scotland, a rival title, supported by France; in Ireland, a perpetual rebellion, inflamed by Rome; on the Continent the forces of Spain roused against her by the double mulment of ambition and bigotry, at a time when Spain commanded almost the whole strength of Europe.

But the cause of Elizabeth was Protestantism; and in that sign she conquered. She shattered the Spanish sword; she paralyzed the power of Rome; she gave freedom to the Dutch; she fought the battle of the French Protestants; every eye of religion suffering through Europe was fixed on the magnanimous woman. At home she elevated the habits and the heart of her people. She even drained off the bitter waters of religious feud, and showed in the vigorous way which they had so long made unwholesome, the seeds of every principle and institution that has since grown up into the strength of the empire. But her great work was the establishment of Protestantism. Like the Jewish King, she found the Ark of God without a shelter; and she built for it the noblest temple in the world; she consecrated her country into its temple.

She died in the fulness of years and in honour; the great Queen of Protestantism throughout the Nations; in the memory of England her name and her reign alike immortal.

(To be continued.)

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