

ways are unsearchable" to us, and past our finding out; yet may we discern the general scheme running through time into eternity. "According to the counsel of his own will," the plan he had laid before the foundation of the world, he created the parent of all mankind in his own image; and he permitted all men to be made sinners, by the disobedience of this one man, that, by the obedience of one, all who receive the free gift may be infinitely holier and happier to all eternity!

## SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Job, ii. 4.

*Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life,*

BEFORE the invention of money trade used to be carried on by barter; that is, by exchanging one commodity for another. The men who had been hunting in the woods for wild beasts, would carry their skins to market, and exchange them with the armourer for so many bows and arrows. As these traffickers were liable to be robbed, they sometimes agreed to give a party of men a share, for defending them, and skins were a very ancient tribute. With them they redeemed their own shares of property, and their lives. It is to one or both of these customs that the text alludes, as a proverb.

Imagine one of these primitive fairs. A multitude of people, from all parts, of different tribes and languages, in a broad field, all overspread with various commodities, to be exchanged. Imagine this fair to be held after a good hunting season, and a bad harvest: the skinners are numerous, and clothing cheap. Wheat, the staff of life, (Isa. iii. 1.) is scarce, and the whole fair dreads a famine; how many skins this year will a man give for this necessary article, without which he and his family must necessarily die! Why, each would add to the heap, and put skin upon skin, for all the skins that a man hath will he give for his life. Imagine the wheat-growers, of which Job was one, carrying home the skins which they had taken for wheat; imagine the party engaged to protect them, raising the tribute, and threatening, if it were not paid, to put them to death. What proportion of skins would these merchants give, in this case of necessity! *Skin upon skin, yea, all the skins that they have will they give for their lives.* The proverb then means, that we should save our lives at any price.—Robinson.

Rom. viii. 17.

*In all these things we are more than conquerors.*

THAT is more than ordinary force in these words, *more than conquerors*; for they express an heroic triumph. He does not simply say, we bear our trials with patience; he not only says, we shall conquer in this conflict; but he affirms, we are more than conquerors. It is much that we resist trials without being oppressed; it is more to conquer those trials, even after a rude combat; but to affirm that the believer is more than a conqueror, is to affirm that he conquers without a combat, and triumphs without resistance.—it is as much as to say, he shall make trials the matter of his joy and glory, as the Apostle says, *We glory in tribulation.*—Claud.

LAODICEA, a city of Asia Minor, which lay about forty miles to the south of Ephesus. In the primitive times of Christianity, as appears from Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, in which the Laodiceans are frequently mentioned, this place possessed a flourishing church. But the doom of Laodicea seems to have been more severe and terrible than that of the other six apocalyptic churches. At Eschisar, close to the ruins of Laodicea, previously to the tremendous earthquake in August, 1822, which desolated the greater part of Syria, there resided about fifty poor inhabitants, two only of whom were Christians, who lived together in a small mill, and neither of whom could read! The stately edifices of ancient Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and jackals.

The prayers of the mosque are the only prayers heard near the still splendid ruins of the city, on which the prophetic denunciation seems to have been fully executed, in its utter rejection as a church.

## ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

## SKETCH OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATIONS.

"ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY" is defined by Mosheim "a clear and faithful narration of the transactions, revolutions, and events, that relate to that large community, which bears the name of Jesus Christ, and is vulgarly known under the denomination of the Church. It comprehends both the external and internal condition of this community, and so connects each event with the causes from which it proceeds, and the instruments which have been concerned in its production, that the attentive reader may be led to observe the displays of providential wisdom and goodness in the preservation of the Church, and thus find his piety improved, as well as his knowledge."

As, however, by the Church, we are to understand the whole body of God's chosen people, in every period of time—the history of "the Church of the living God" may be considered as coeval with the history of the human race and the creation of the world. It was originally constituted and planted, with its worship and ordinances, in the terrestrial paradise which had been prepared by the all-wise and benevolent Creator, as the temple and abode of the first earthly intelligences and worshippers, in their social capacity; and where, in their primeval state of innocency and purity, the first human pair enjoyed religious fellowship with each other, and were admitted to the most intimate and hallowed communion with the glorious object of their worship, by whom their adorations and love were accepted as grateful sacrifice. Nor did the Church thus planted perish in the moral ruin into which its first members fell through transgression; the promise of Messiah secured to the offenders and their posterity the continuance and privileges of their church-state and ordinances, as means of instruction, comfort and salvation. The Church of God and the people of God are one—and hence, in every age, and in the darkest and most degenerate periods of the world, God has had a Church—a people, a chosen and peculiar people, whom he has been pleased to distinguish from all others, by manifestations of his presence, tokens of his favour, and revelations of his will.

The antedeluvian patriarchs and families, composing the Church and people of God, were the sons and posterity of Seth, who was probably Adam's third son, in whose days, and especially about the time of the birth of his son Enos, it is said, "men began to call upon the name of the Lord," or to call themselves by the name of the Lord, as in the margin of the bible; or, more generally and publicly to distinguish themselves as the worshippers of Jehovah, and whose posterity are called the "sons of God," as the posterity of Cain were called the "sons of men." In this family, (the family of Seth,) the knowledge and worship of God were preserved amidst the general corruption, and until the universal destruction of the human race by the overwhelming deluge. If it be asked, what then became of the Church and people of God? it is answered, they were indeed diminished and brought low, but still were preserved in the family of Noah, who survived the dread catastrophe of the world's destruction three hundred and fifty years. From: at time to the calling of Abraham, the Church was composed principally of the descendants of Shem, one of the sons of Noah. Then did the Almighty condescend to enter into solemn covenant with Abraham, and promise that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, and that they should possess the land of Canaan, in which he was then a stranger and sojourner, as the place of their rest—where he would be to them a God, and they should be to him a people, until the times of Messiah, even for an everlasting possession, as a type of heaven. This covenant and promise was renewed and repeated to Isaac and Jacob by the God of Abraham, whose children, composing the visible Church, sojourned in Egypt about four hundred years, and until Moses was raised up to lead them forth, to take possession of the land promised to their fathers—a land flowing with milk and honey. Forty years was the Church in the wilderness journeying towards it, and finally, upon the death of Moses, and under the guidance and command of Joshua, they entered upon the long promised possession—con-

quered the inhabitants, and divided the country among them, according to their tribes. Here they planted vineyards, and built cities, and became at once the most favoured and enlightened people on earth. The Temple, and Oracles, and Prophets, and Presence of Jehovah, were with them, and thus were literally fulfilled the predictions and promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as it respects the planting of the Jewish Church and nation in the land of Canaan.

During the 3,600 years which elapsed from the creation to the days of Malachi, the last of the Jewish prophets, the Church was placed under those various dispensations of the truth and grace of God, which have been dispensed in different periods of the world by successive revelations of the will and mercy of God to mankind. They have been distinguished as the Dispensation of Innocency, or the covenant of works; the Adamic Dispensation, or the covenant of grace after the fall; the Noachical Dispensation, or the religion of Noah; the Abrahamic Dispensation; the Mosaical Dispensation, or Jewish religion, and the peculiar covenant of Sinai. They may, however, be comprehended under two general distinctions: the Patriarchal, and the Mosaic or Jewish Dispensations—the first commencing with Adam, and reaching to the giving of the law by Moses; the second, from that event to the death of Christ.

It would not comport with the brevity necessary to this sketch of the Old Testament Church, to attempt to trace the effects which the peculiar and modifying circumstances of successive dispensations have produced upon the government, worship and privileges of that church: it is sufficient to observe, that as each succeeding dispensation excelled that by which it was preceded, in the clearness and fullness of those revelations of the Divine character, purposes and will, by which it was distinguished—so the Church, in its members, acquired a more hallowed and elevated tone of piety, and became more abundantly enriched with spiritual gifts and privileges. If the Church, during those early ages, had its season of depression, affliction and correction, it also had its times of revival and prosperity—it had its altars, priests and sacrifice—its saints, confessors and martyrs. "By faith Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." "Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him." "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Abraham, for his purity, faith and obedience, was honoured in being called the "friend of God." Joseph and Moses and Joshua were illustrious characters, and members of the Old Testament Church: "And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets—who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." Heb. xi. 32-34. These, and multitudes beside, whose names are not recorded, were holy men—men of faith and piety, and devotedness to God, who "obtained a good report through faith," and not counting their lives dear unto themselves, finished their course with joy.

In thus tracing the sacred history of the Church of God through the early ages of the world, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, the providence and wisdom and goodness of the Almighty are strikingly apparent in guiding, comforting and delivering his people amidst the difficulties, dangers and enemies by which they were surrounded. "For the Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye; as an eagle stirreth up her nest, uttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the stony rock." Deut. xxxii. 9-13. Thus beautifully and poetically does Moses describe the paternal and providential care of the great Head of the Church over his ancient people, who, if they were punished for disobedience and proneness to idolatry with pestilence, defeat and captivity, were also succoured and delivered in seasons of greatest extremity: so that in every age they were enabled to set up their "Ebenezer, saying, hitherto hath the Lord helped us."