

of useful knowledge, squandered their time in the study of the fabulous legends of pretended saints and martyrs, or in composing histories equally fabulous.

This woful corruption of doctrine and morals in the clergy was followed, as might be expected, by a very general depravity of the common people; and though we cannot suppose that God left himself altogether without witnesses in this dark period, yet the number of the truly faithful had dwindled down to a mere remnant, and the wide-spreading defection seemed to call aloud for the judgment of heaven. In view of this deplorable state of Christianity, anterior to the appearance of Mahommed, we are prepared to admit at once the justness of the following remarks upon the moral ends designed to be accomplished by Providence in permitting this desolating scourge to arise at this particular crisis of the world.

"At length," says Prideaux, "having wearied the patience and long-suffering of God, he raised up the Saracens to be the instruments of his wrath to punish them for it; who, taking advantage of the weakness of their power, and the distraction of counsels which their divisions had caused among them, overran, with a terrible devastation, all the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. And having fixed that tyranny over them which hath ever since afflicted those parts of the world, turned every where their churches into mosques, and their worship into a horrid superstition; and instead of that holy religion which they had abused, forced on them the abominable imposture of Mahomet.—Thus those once glorious and most flourishing churches, for a punishment of their wickedness, being given up to the insult, ravage, and scorn of the worst of enemies, were overwhelmed with such terrible destruction as reduced them to that low and miserable condition under which they have ever since groaned; the all-wise Providence of God seeming to continue them thus unto this day under the pride and persecution of Mahometan tyranny, for no other end but to be an example and warning unto others against the wickedness of separation and division."