

in one example like this, even if it stood alone, encouragement for those who come *burdened* with one desire; or who, if they have more than one, still come *burdened*, whenever they make their requests known unto God?

### SUCCESSION.

Apostolic succession is all very well, but we don't know where you can get it, pure and simple, except from the New Testament. Instead of hunting after apostolic succession, or deducing it from a *priori* reasoning, we much prefer the safer, sounder, and more reasonable course of appealing directly to the New Testament for our principles, pattern and polity, than to suspend any question as to the correctness of doctrine, the validity of ordination, the administration of ordinances, or the authority of a Christian Church, on our power to trace back an ecclesiastical succession from the present time, and through all the dark ages, to the apostles, in order to justify our claim to be churches of Christ—such as were formed and tended by his apostles—and to show that our ministry, and the ordinances it administers in the name of the Lord, are valid. Doubtless some kind of succession there was; but it is not so apparent that we can lay much stress on it; for historical documents may be destroyed, may be corrupted, or may fail in explicitness; and there fail to prove any succession such as is claimed. All, however, that could be gained by complete possession of this knowledge, were it possible, we now have in the most certain and reliable form in the teaching, testimony, prophecy and history of the New Testament. There is furnished for all coming ages a divine delineation of the Church of Christ as respects doctrine, the spiritual character of its members, the ordinances they are required to observe, the holiness they should exhibit, the benevolence they should cultivate, and the great end they should have in view—the glory of God—the magnifying of Christ, and the highest good of mankind.

If a body or congregation of people in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, or elsewhere, conform in their principles in the ordinances they practice, in their spirit, in the life they lead, and the motives that influence and mould their conduct to the teaching and requirements of the New Testament, that congregation may be taken as really in the succession—and possesses vital and significant marks of its relations to Christ and the apostolic church. But suppose that a congregation or church, without the proper and distinctive marks, may possibly trace its pedigree through the ages back to the apostles, of what value, we ask, is such a succession, though perfect in form and date, "if lacking the spirit of Christ, and having therefore no spiritual fellowship with the apostles, or with the regenerate of any age?"

To the law add to the testimony of Christ: if hierarchies, establishment or churches of humble name and form, speak not and practice not according to the word of the Lord, they are not, whatever their profession or pretensions, in the real, true, spiritual succession that is linked with Christ shall continue when earthly relation and tie are forever sundered.—*Christian Visitor*.

THE hardest thing in this busy world of ours is to do nothing.

HERE is a saying to which all parties to the recent discussion will agree: "That man is to be pitied whose only hope of escaping hell is that there is no such place."

"SEE how I tread on the pride of Plato!" said Diogenes, as he entered the richly carpeted room of that philosopher. "But with greater pride," was the searching reply.

IT should cheer the steps of the servant of Jesus Christ as he journeys, to know that even in darkness his guide is still with him, and that guide is the King of the country through which he is travelling.—*John Foster*.

THROUGH the porch of prayer is the way to the inner harmonies and beauties of the Word of God. Payson is recorded as saying that he had prayed over nearly every text of Scripture. Jonathan Edwards approached the study of God's Word by a long preparation of prayer. Bunyan supplicated God that wisdom might be given him in his exceeding need. Beautiful and touching it is to think of McChesney and Bonar going up and down Palestine, Bible in hand, seeking for truth, collating and comparing, yet prefacing every study with a prayer for light.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### BLASPHEMY UNDER THE LAST VIALS.

BY R. D. MACKAY.

(Continued.)

The great sin of blasphemy was committed not only by the speculative infidelity, rationalism, and others of kindred principle of the old Roman earth and elsewhere, but also by new daring public acts of Papal Rome. This took place in 1854, by the Papal Act declaring the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary. Pius IX. himself, in an encyclical letter in 1846, called Mary "our surest hope and firmest reliance, than whose patronage nothing is more potent with God." And in an Allocation at Gaeta in 1849 he said, "Let us have recourse to the most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, who being the mother of God finds what she seeks, and cannot be frustrated." Blasphemous enough! But now he declares as an infallible dogma or article of faith, binding on conscience, the immaculate conception of Mary. Another fearful act of public blasphemy was committed in 1870, when the Vatican Council, composed of Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops from all parts of the Roman Catholic world, adopted the dogma that the Pope, speaking in his seat of judgment, is infallible. Shameful outrage on common sense!—bare-faced lie on all history! It is nothing less than an unutterable insult to God and His Christ the sole Head of the Church—for a body of men, representatives of what they profess to be the true and only Church, to enact as an article of faith that an imperfect, sinful man cannot err. Both these Acts were attempts to thrust God out of His place; and farther any calling themselves His servants can scarcely go to dishonor Him.

In the Book of the Revelation, chap. xvi., God by John speaking of the vials or judgment events which consume the great enemy of His interests, gives an account of blasphemy connected with, or rising from, them. In the eighth and ninth verses there is an account of the fourth vial: "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory." Does not this apply to the events, with their results above mentioned, of the tremendous Revolution of 1789? Because the royal emblem of France is the sun, and still more, the mighty nation, through its tyrant rulers, had the position of the sun with regard to its importance to the Papal world, not excluding other persecuting Romanist Princes. Modest Robert Fleming, in his "Rise and Fall of the Papacy," with wonderful discernment states this view, although his book was published nearly a hundred years before the event. Long years before the Revolution, France, with its own hands, by a bloody death or cruel banishment removed the numerous citizens who truly took the word of God for their guide, and thereby removed the eternal principles, which, carrying with them the countenance and blessing of Heaven, were alone fitted to guide in national emergencies. The certain consequence was, when the people, owing to the collapse of national finances and the approach of grievous hardship, had nothing to direct them but principles of men of the stamp of those who so remorselessly removed the righteous people of the Lord, and of men of the stamp of Voltaire; under the scorching events of the dreadful time they "blasphemed the name of God which hath power over these plagues; and as the scorching from the great heat went on, or changed its form, or increased, so did the blasphemy go on and increase; "and they repented not to give him glory." From like causes, in various manner and measure, the spirit of blasphemy passed through the nations wherever Popery existed by public national sanction, and even where the Bible was in the hands of the people, as in Protestant countries,—but countries where the people had become cold towards the vital principles of that Word, and the rulers had, for political or private ends, begun to connive at or further the corrupt workings of the Papacy. It may be said in objection to this view:—On the supposition that it is the Papacy on which the vials or plagues descend, then it would be expected that it is the Papacy itself, through its leaders and people, which is alone meant as blaspheming. This is not necessarily true, at least that the blaspheming should be confined to the Papacy, since the Papacy

in itself is largely a system of blasphemy, as is the Beast of Rev. xiii. 15. For inspired John, then, to say here that it is the Papacy which blasphemed would be to say that it did what it was doing all along, which is not likely, unless by new and still more aggravated acts of blasphemy. However, the word used to signify those who blasphemed must guide as to who are intended. It is not "Beast," nor "Woman," but "Men," "men blasphemed." So were the historic facts at the time named. They were men or the people in general of the capital and other places in Papal France at the Revolution who blasphemed. Great masses of them were indeed baptized Roman Catholics; but now they openly rise against their teachers, who were already blaspheming, and because they deemed the Papal system of their teachers, which professed to be for God, hostile to their rights and largely the cause of their sufferings they rose also—not being better taught—against God himself, and in their own way, blasphemed. The expression "men blasphemed" gives ample room for the view taken that the blasphemy of the period in Protestant, as well as Roman Catholic, countries is also intended. Should there be any lingering hesitation to admit this, a remark of Sir Isaac Newton may give assistance. "God in His Word," says that great thinker in substance, "sometimes speaks of things as He sees them, which men, as they see them, may regard as irrelevant." God saw in the days of inspired John the calamities which France by its Popery was to bring on itself, the blasphemy that would there spring out of that Popery, and from France spread round and round wherever there was Popery and any mere profession of the religion of the Bible or nominal Protestantism, which is virtual Popery; and were he to speak of that sad event so long before, would not this expression be most fitting, "Men blasphemed the name of God; and repented not to give him glory."

Was not the blasphemy of Acts xvi. 10, 11, fulfilled in connection with the events of history above named, which took place specially at Rome from near the beginning of the century to 1870? In the original Greek, the word rendered "seat" is "*thronon*," which can be fittingly translated "throne." "The fifth angel poured out his vial on the throne or seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness." The French and Austrian sun had failed to do its usual work, when the rulers, with the people of the mysterious Papal kingdom, knew not what to do, and entirely failing to comprehend the meaning of the hand of God down upon the *throne*, they were filled with perplexity; as it were, "gnawed their tongues for pain," and instead of repenting of their evil deeds, "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores." The dogmas of the immaculate conception of the Virgin and the infallibility of the Pope are new and extraordinary Acts of the Papal Power. As sentiments, they have been long before held and expressed by Roman Catholics, but were never passed by the acknowledged public authority as dogmas or articles of faith until the period named. And it is not difficult to see—which is, indeed, not without its significance, calling forth the notice of the public press—that it is the most grievous pressure of the events upon them, issuing in the loss of the temporal sovereignty, that has led to the passing of these Acts. Intelligent men, after a mere cursory glance at these dogmas, may admit their blasphemous character; yet even they may not see them of such aggravated description as that they should be made the subject of any particular divine prophecy. When, however, it is considered that these Acts were passed by the acknowledged representative authority, not of a small body of men, but a body of about 160,000,000 people—professing themselves, too, to be the only true Church, and representative of the truth of God on earth—with all the vast dangerous bearing of the Acts on the Christian as well as non-Christian world in general, they might come to be of another mind. In this view it may well be asked: Did not God look on these fearful Acts of the Papacy of that moment as to make His servant John to speak of them? Are they not the blasphemy of the fifth vial?

It should not be overlooked that the expression in the description of the fourth vial, "they repented not to give him glory," means that the blasphemy under that vial did not then terminate, any more than the corresponding great wickedness for which the vials were poured out, and, accordingly, would be carried into the period of the fifth vial; and the words, too, in the description of the fifth vial, "they repented not of