

refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Though but comparatively few, there were some, even in those times of grossest darkness, who, "abiding under the shadow of the Almighty," could say, "we are persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

The period of a large deliverance to the people of God at length arrived. The deliverance came, by means of the simple proclamation of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It was first enjoyed, in greatest extent, on the continent of Europe. Many faithful witnesses for Christ made their appearance, testifying the immediate necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sword of many enemies was raised—but fell powerless before the uplifted sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And though many Kings and great men of the earth took counsel together, against the Lord and His Anointed, yet, when a testimony for Christ was publicly raised, He who hath the hearts of all men at His disposal, and to whom all power is committed, brought the hearts of many Rulers of nations to the belief and obedience of the truth, and incited them to raise their arm of secular power against the long dominant, intruding secular power of him who opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.—Churches were immediately formed, wherever the truth of the Gospel was known, preached and professed. The servants of Christ met together in solemn Assembly, after the Divinely recorded example of the brethren at Jerusalem. He who is the Governor among the nations, gave the revived churches favour, in the eyes of many civil Rulers—and thus mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

When churches were formed, by means of the preaching and study of the word, it became a question, an important one, one which, with the Bible now as their supreme guide, must necessarily have compelled the attention, both of the pastors and the flocks, what was the method in which the churches were to be governed, under the Divine Head, the Redeemer? In other words, under what form of ecclesiastical government should pastors labour, and the flock of Christ be fed and managed—all enjoying the blessings connected with the administration of Christ's ordinances among them?

It ought to be remembered that those who formed the churches at that time, both the pastors and flocks, had, in common with all others, been living under the deadening influence of systems, opposed, both to the letter and the spirit of the Bible, and that with the Bible itself, very few of them were intimately acquainted, because of the want of its free and abundant circulation. Notwithstanding all this, it is a remarkable fact, that the churches which were formed throughout the continent of