

THE CANADIAN

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. III.

TORONTO, MAY 1, 1856.

No. 5.

Miscellaneous Articles.

THE RISE AND FALL OF ANTI-CHRIST.

Every pious and reflecting mind must be struck with the admirable perfection of the Sacred Scriptures. They contain a complete index of the transactions of men and the dispensations of Providence from the beginning to the end of time. All, indeed, is not given in the way of history; but that which is wanting in history, is supplied by prophecy. The hiatus between the histories of the Old Testament and the New is supplied by the prophecies of Daniel and others concerning the coming of the Messiah; and, in like manner, the hiatus between the histories of the New Testament and the second coming of Christ is supplied by the prophecies of John in the Revelation concerning the future sufferings and glories of his Church; so that it may justly be said that in the sacred Volume we have a complete index of the transactions of men and the dispensations of Providence from the beginning to the close of time.

The histories of the Bible are easily explained, because they refer to things that are past; but the prophecies are much more difficult, because they have reference to things that are future. Nor was it ever intended by God that the prophecies should be fully comprehended or explained, until they should be accomplished. The prophecies of Daniel and others concerning the coming of the Messiah were necessarily dark and mysterious to the Jews; but now that they have been fulfilled, they appear to us exceedingly plain and explicit. In like manner, the prophecies of John in the Revelation, in so far as they refer to the past, are quite clear, but in so far as they have reference to the future, they necessarily appear to us dark and mysterious.

These remarks will apply to the rise and fall of Antichrist, the subject to which we are now about to direct the attention of our readers. There is no subject, perhaps, that has given rise to greater perplexity among commentators, or to greater divergence of opinion, than that which we propose to discuss. The most eminent commentators, indeed, are agreed in adopting the same principles of interpretation. They agree in thinking that the wild Beast described in the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation must be understood of Antichrist; and Protestant divines generally agree in the opinion that this Antichrist must be understood as referring to the Pontiff of Rome. But the main difficulty lies in determining the precise period when the said Antichrist arose; or, in other words, when the Pontiff of Rome became the Antichrist of Scripture. Some hold that it was when he assumed the title of Universal Bishop; others affirm that it was not till he became a civil as well as ecclesiastical ruler; while, at the same time, there is some divergence of opinion as to the precise period of his assuming either title.