

to commemorate the extirpation of the followers of the Nazarene. But the Catacombs could not bury the Christian Church, lions could not devour her, nor the fires of Nero consume her. She conquered Roman hostility, and, under the white-crossed banner of Constantine, turned Pagan Rome into Christian Rome. The Mohammedan invasion swept like a flood over Christian Europe, threatening to swallow up the church. It was a choice between the Koran or death. But He, who defends His church, raised up in Charles Martel an instrument by which He drove the Saracen invader out of Europe and saved His people.

Papal Rome, by a baseless assumption of the primacy of Peter and the power of the keys, by arrogating to herself the right to absolve from sin, to crush or control civil authority and to sit as Lord of men's conscience, well nigh destroyed the true church. By inquisition and persecution, by torture and bribe, she has sought to make men build on a false foundation and to extinguish the light of revelation which would guide them to the true. Yet God has never been without his witnesses to the truth. And although demons may have shrieked in an ecstasy of delight, because they thought the church was destroyed, when Huss, Savonarola, Ridley and Latimer fell to grey ashes in the flames; nevertheless, like the phoenix, that fabled bird of old, it rose from their ashes to a new and immortal life. To-day, the power of the papacy is broken; light again breaks on Romanism; already we see a movement towards the old and true foundation of the church among her adherents.

Infidelity and scepticism have arrayed their forces against the church. From the days of Celsus and Porphyry down to the present time they continue to hurl their poisoned shafts against her. They have assailed her with philosophy, plausible arguments, base insinuations and bitter sarcasm. Men of rich gifts and rare intellects have been her foes. But all the artillery of the infidel has beaten as harmlessly against the Rock of Ages, as pistol bullets against the sides of an ironclad. Let us not fear for the divine church. God dwells in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. No weapon that has been lifted up against her prospered. Their books have passed into the dusty corners of libraries and their names are unhonored and forgotten, but the Church of God stands forth more glorious than ever, the joy of the whole earth.

Rationalism and criticism have both been hostile to the church.