

General Council of Christendom, he placed a copy of the Scriptures on the Throne, in the midst of the Assembly, proclaiming that the Bible was the rule of conscience and the infallible arbiter of truth.

Thus the Holy Scriptures reappeared and put forth her leaves for the healing of the nations. Thus did Pagan Rome stamp the residue with her feet, and waste the Saints of the Most High. Thus did God by a signal and sovereign Providence preserve and perpetuate the Holy Scriptures.

#### THE REFORMATION.

From the deliverance of the Fourth Century we pass along to a still greater work of preservation and perpetuation of the Scriptures in the Sixteenth Century by the blessed Reformation.

The Scriptures had well nigh disappeared from the earth—"Darkness covered the earth, a gross darkness the people." "The people were destroyed for lack of knowledge." The Bible was literally entombed in the sepulchre of human traditions built by Ecclesiastical Rome, for the Scriptures were substituted the Latin Breviary, the Missal, the ordinances of men, and the Traditions for the truth. In 680 Italy could not furnish a man sufficiently versed in Scripture to send to a Council that had been called—to find such a man they would require to send to Britain. You do not require to be reminded that in the interval the use of the Word was interdicted under severe penalty—sometimes death—the Waldenses, Albigenses, Lollards, Bohemians, need but be named to fill up the story. This spirit of ignorance and opposition continued for 900 years. The Bible written, or printed in the tongue of the people, was regarded by the priests as a dangerous book, but so eager were men for the Word of God that in fifty years thirty versions were published in the languages of the Countries that were awakened as from the dead. Luther, while imprisoned, translates the Word for his people; and the Castle of Wartburg (1520) becomes a Temple from which issues the living waters. Le Fevre in the following years gives his version to France. Olivetan, Calvin's cousin (1535), gives his French version to the Vaudois. Tyndale and Coverdale give theirs to England. What painstaking scholarship, sacrifice of life and treasure, this early restoration of the Scriptures cost. The face of Europe was changed. It seemed as if the Mighty Angel of the Book of Revelation had, come down from heaven, clothed in a cloud, a rainbow was upon his head, the symbol of peace, his face as it were the sun, his progress was irresistible, he had in his hand a little book—an open book—his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, he cried with a loud voice, the nations heard the voice and awoke from their spiritual death. "The Word of the Lord had free course and was glorified." "Great was the company of them that published the same." It was a return to primitive simplicity of worship, government, and christian life.

The previous Providential preservation of God's Word was marked and impressive; and the supremacy to which it was raised had the mark of the Divine hand; this was more of a resurrection in the midst of an apostate church, the Work of the Holy Spirit is conspicuously clear, and it was a work in which the Word was chiefly instrumental. We require to distinguish between the initial part of the Reformation, which was purely spiritual, in its means and manifestations, and its after stages, when political and secular issues were involved—and these were inevitable, as the fruit of the Apostacy, and the realization of Christ's words—"I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword." It was the seed of the Word, as life from the dead.

Every revival that is of God lasts for about one generation—thirty or forty years. There are, indeed, important and valuable results that are handed over to the generations that follow; but the life is not hereditary, the Spirit of God does from time to time bring souls from darkness to light, from death to life, but it is all new in others, "it is not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is an important fact too often overlooked in our estimate of the continued influences of a religious life.