

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION, UNCERTAINTY OF POST-APOSTOLIC WRITINGS.

THE Early Christian Church may be studied either in the light of Old Testament prophecy or New Testament description, or Post-Apostolic narrative. The light reflected by the last is dim and uncertain. The authorities acquainted personally with the apostles are either very few or none at all. And yet to many minds the general conception of what the Christian church should be is moulded more by what those few uninspired men have narrated than by what the Divine Spirit has written. It has been so in all ages. The natural heart sighs for the things that be of men more than the things that be of God. In view of this we can adore the wisdom of that Providence which has drawn a veil over the days immediately succeeding the lives of the apostles. No effort of ours can lift that veil. Did we try it we should have our labor for our pains. I shall not, therefore, trouble you much with the writings of the Early Fathers. We have a more sure word of prophecy to which we do well to take heed, and the barrenness or absence of early Post-Apostolic writings was no doubt planned in order to make that word still more precious to enquiring minds. Through it I purpose to treat of the Early Christian Church.

THE OLD TESTAMENT A KEY TO THE NEW.

Nor will I confine myself chiefly to New Testament narrative, however bright the light which that throws upon our subject. Artists say it is easier to trace the outlines of an object from its reflections in water than from the object itself. And since the Old Testament is a reflection of the New, it may be easier for us to trace there the outlines of the Christian Church than in the New Testament itself.

It is well-known that Zwingle's views were decided against the doctrine of transubstantiation by a vision pointing him to a passage in the Pentateuch. Awakening out of his distracted sleep and comparing the passage dreamed about, It is the Lord's Passover, with the other which perplexed him, "This is my body," he saw in the one a clear exposition of the other. It, *i. e.*, the feast is called the Lord's Passover, though it was simply to commemorate that Passing over. This, *i. e.*, the bread is called His body, though it is simply to commemorate His body broken. An Eastern figure of speech simply, which the philosophical Gentile mind construed as a reality. How many errors might have been avoided if Gentile philosophy had not taken the place of the Old Testament Scriptures.

[On this point Adolph Saphir says: The Pagan and Gentile element in the church has been the source of theoretical heresy and practical apostacy; and not even the reformation has entirely got rid