

flock of Christ, proclaiming the truth, in season and out of season, thus making sinners free and adding to the church such as should be saved, the Spirit of the Lord, putting forth His Divine power, by the uplifted standard of the word, rolled back the flood of wickedness from Christ's witnesses on earth, thus preserving them from the pollutions of the world out of which they had been called, and making them meet to be partakers of the Heavenly inheritance; and though some of them were permitted to fall in the struggle, as witnesses or martyrs for Christ, such a termination of the conflict was experienced by themselves to be great gain; while, to the enemies of the truth, "though they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so"—the proverbial saying was verified, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." And, as the lesson and encouragement to all the churches of Christ over the world, who might in future contemplate the scene of such a conflict, and the true and only secret of the success with which the warfare of the good soldiers of Christ was crowned, the Spirit of God directed the eye of faith still to the written word—"they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony!" And wherever such faithfulness was not displayed by the stewards of the mysteries of God, and such reception, retention, and use of the truth as it is in Jesus did not mark the sentiments and conduct of the members of the church, He who is the faithful and the true witness, who is watching the progress of His cause on the earth, and keeping account of the devotedness or faithlessness of His servants—though bearing long, and giving many a warning that the candlestick of His word should be removed out of its place—at length, as the sovereign and supreme Judge interfered and quenched that Heavenly light which had by such a people been despised, and its Divine Author dishonoured.

Such is the history, and such the true secret of the continuance, corruption, or annihilation of every church, planted either by the Apostles or those who succeeded them, by means of the preaching of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

During the course of the many centuries that have passed since "the fulness of time," when Christ appeared "to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," the numberless errors to which sinners are prone, and against which He warns His people in His word; though they at first arose from the falling away of individuals, rapidly assumed the form of systems, regularly organised plans, drawing into them, with the view of their adoption and propagation, whole communities professing to be the disciples of Christ; the framers and leaders of which system, instead of making, or permitting to be made, an appeal to the word of God as the supreme standard of their actings and decisions, assumed to themselves the power of teaching for the doctrines of God the command-