

simplicity of their faith by admitting the reasonings of vain men. There is something alarming in the thought that the human heart is so ready to misrepresent, or change, or deny the doctrines of Christ.—They are our only foundation of hope: and yet even in the days of the apostles the heresies broached in opposition were both numerous and deadly. “Many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Even then they propagated “damnable heresies,” “denying the Lord that bought them”—“turning the grace of God into licentiousness,” and “speaking great swelling words of vanity.” The awful effect of these things is referred to in the epistle to the Corinthians, and still more particularly in the addresses of Christ to the “seven churches.”

4. Another thing which ought to be noticed as the cause of immense harm in the early christian church was the attempt to *popularize* the doctrines of the gospel, by putting out of view the more disagreeable truths, and then attempting to trace in them some resemblance to the more popular and respectable doctrines of the philosophers; and in fact by an attempt to amalgamate christianity either with Paganism or Judaism. Against this treachery to the truth the apostles uttered over and over again their most solemn warnings. “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, &c.” “Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.”

5. Another of the antichrists of the apostles was that abuse of the doctrines of grace generally distinguished now by the name of Antinomianism. “Since salvation is of grace,” said they, “it matters not how we live.” “Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.” These persons, said the apostle, “profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, &c.”

6. As all truths, whether in science or religion, have a natural affinity, so all errors seem to have some kind of natural relationship, and only require time and a skilful hand to place them in one edifice. Of this,

the history of the church has afforded at least one striking illustration. The apostles, enlightened by the spirit of God, did not only, as we have seen, describe many of the forms which antichrist assumed in their day—exposing one by one the errors which go to make up the colossal system of irreligion now known by that name. But, in their day, the materials for that awful superstructure lay around in disconnected pieces, no man as yet being found skilful enough to lay them together. But the Omniscient One could see how completely adapted they were to each other; and accordingly He directed his servants to describe the appearance of the building, when all the scattered materials had been collected and arranged. A strange conglomeration it surely is—a wonderful compound,—in fact, a “mystery”; and yet more correctly designated “the mystery of iniquity.”

If it be permitted to departed spirits to keep up their knowledge of what occurs in this mundane sphere, we cannot doubt that some who, in their day, hewed stones for this temple of antichrist would have feelings of wonder and regret, while they contemplated the part which they bore in helping forward the work of God’s enemies.—Very different, in many cases, was their intention. Finding strong prejudices against the gospel which they loved, and desiring as far as possible to overcome such feelings, they laboured to conciliate; and, as if the truth of God had been a mere human invention, and therefore not infallible, they took upon themselves to modify—to pare and chip away the more objectionable things, or at least to keep them out of sight. Other parts were mingled with the most popular of the doctrines of the “schools,” and all with the hope of overcoming the prejudices of their opponents. The preaching of the gospel gradually came to be an appeal to the imagination or the carnal reason, rather than to the conscience of the hearers. Thus they supposed they got rid of the charge of bigotry or enthusiasm; and dealing largely in the philosophy of the age, they raised themselves in the estimation of the proud and carnal, who would value such knowledge, though hating the.